The Plum in the Golden Vase or, CHIN P'ING MEI



Translated by

David Tod Roy

Volume Two: The Rivals

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VOLUME TWO: THE RIVALS

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To all those students, friends, and colleagues

WHO PARTICIPATED WITH ME IN THE EXCITEMENT OF EXPLORING THE WORLD OF THE *CHIN P'ING MEI* OVER THE PAST QUARTER CENTURY

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Needless to say, whatever infelicities and errors remain in the translation are solely my own.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE FOLLOWING list includes all characters who appear in the novel, listed alphabetically by surname. All characters with dates in parentheses after their names are historical figures from the Sung dynasty. Characters who bear the names of historical figures from the Ming dynasty are identified in the notes.

An Ch'en, winner of first place in the *chin-shih* examinations but displaced in favor of Ts'ai Yün because he is the younger brother of the proscribed figure, An Tun; becomes a protégé of Ts'ai Ching and is patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing, later rising to the rank of secretary of the Bureau of Irrigation and Transportation in the Ministry of Works; rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

An Ch'en's second wife.

An, Consort. See Liu, Consort.

An Tun (1042–1104), elder brother of An Ch'en, a high official whose name has been proscribed for his role in the partisan political conflicts of the late eleventh century.

An-t'ung, page boy of Aunt Yang.

An-t'ung, page boy of Miao T'ien-hsiu who is rescued by a fisherman and does his utmost to see justice done for the murder of his master.

An-t'ung, page boy of Wang Hsüan.

Apricot Hermitage, Layman of. See Wang Hsüan.

Autumn Chrysantheum. See Ch'iu-chü.

Barefaced Adept, Taoist master from the Fire Dragon Monastery in the Obdurate Grotto of the Vacuous Mountains from whom Yang Kuang-yen acquires the art of lying.

Bean curd-selling crone who identifies the home of Commander Yüan in Potter's Alley to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Beanpole, The." See Hui-ch'ing.

Black-robed lictor on the staff of Ho Hsin.

Black-robed lictor who announces the arrival of Chang Pang-ch'ang and Ts'ai Yu to congratulate Chu Mien.

Black Whirlwind. See Li K'uei.

Brocade Tiger. See Yen Shun.

Busybody who directs Ch'iao Yün-ko to Dame Wang's teashop when he is looking for Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Cassia. See Li Kuei-chieh.

Chai Ch'ien, majordomo of Ts'ai Ching's household in the Eastern Capital.

Chai Ch'ien's wife.

Chai Ching-erh, Sutra Chai, proprietor of a sutra printing shop in Ch'ing-ho.

Chai, Sutra. See Chai Ching-erh.

Ch'ai Chin, Little Whirlwind, Little Lord Meng-ch'ang, direct descendant of Ch'ai Jung (921–59), emperor Shih-tsung (r. 954–59) of the Later Chou dynasty (951–60).

Ch'ai Huang-ch'eng, paternal uncle of Ch'ai Chin.

Ch'an Master Snow Cave. See P'u-ching.

Chang An, caretaker of Hsi-men Ch'ing's ancestral graveyard outside Ch'ing-ho.

Chang, Auntie, go-between who helps arrange Ch'en Ching-chi's marriage to Ko Ts'ui-p'ing.

Chang Ch'eng, a neighborhood head in Ch'ing-ho.

Chang Ch'ing, a criminal innkeeper with whom Wu Sung seeks refuge after the murder of P'an Chin-lien.

Chang Ch'ing's wife.

Chang Ch’uan-erh, a garrulous chair-bearer in Ch’ing-ho, partner of Wei Ts’ung-erh.

Chang the Fourth. See Chang Ju-i.

Chang the Fourth. See Chang Lung.

Chang Hao-wen, Chang the Importunate, Chang the Second, proprietor of a paper shop in Ch’ing-ho, acquaintance of Han Tao-kuo.

Chang Hsi-ch’un, a ballad singer maintained at one time as a mistress by Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Chang Hsi-ts’un, an acquaintance of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s who invites him to his home for a birthday party.

Chang Hsiao-hsien, Hsiao Chang-hsien, Trifler Chang, “ball clubber” in Ch’ing-ho who plays the tout to Wang Ts’ai on his visits to the licensed quarter and upon whom Hsi-men Ch’ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system at the behest of Lady Lin.

Chang the Importunate. See Chang Hao-wen.

Chang Ju-i, Chang the Fourth, wife of Hsiung Wang, employed in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household as a wet nurse for Kuan-ko and later for Hsiao-ko, sexual partner of Hsi-men Ch’ing after the death of Li P’ing-erh, finally married to Lai-hsing.

Chang Ju-i’s mother.

Chang Ko (1068–1113), promoted to the post of vice minister of the Ministry of Works for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Chang Kuan, brother-in-law of Ch’en Hung and maternal uncle of Ch’en Ching-chi, militia commander of Ch’ing-ho.

Chang Kuan’s sister. See Ch’en Hung’s wife, née Chang.

Chang Kuan’s wife.

Chang Lung, Chang the Fourth, maternal uncle of Meng Yü-lou’s first husband Yang Tsung-hsi who unsuccessfully proposes that she remarry Shang Hsiao-t’ang and quarrels with Aunt Yang when she decides to marry Hsi-men Ch’ing instead.

Chang Lung, judicial commissioner of the Liang-Huai region.

Chang Lung's elder sister (Chang the Fourth's elder sister), mother of Yang Tsung-hsi and Yang Tsung-pao.

Chang Lung's wife (Chang the Fourth's wife).

Chang Mao-te, Chang the Second, nephew of Mr. Chang, the well-to-do merchant who first seduces P'an Chin-lien; a major rival of Hsi-men Ch'ing in the social world of Ch'ing-ho who, immediately after Hsi-men Ch'ing's death, bribes Cheng Chü-chung to intervene with Chu Mien and have him appointed to Hsi-men Ch'ing's former position as judicial commissioner so he can take over where Hsi-men Ch'ing left off.

Chang Mao-te's son, marries Eunuch Director Hsü's niece.

Chang Mei, professional actor of Hai-yen style drama.

Chang, Military Director-in-chief, official in Meng-chou.

Chang, Mr., a well-to-do merchant in Ch'ing-ho who first seduces P'an Chin-lien.

Chang, Mrs., wife of Mr. Chang, née Yü.

Chang, Old Mother, go-between who tries to sell two inexperienced country girls, Sheng-chin and Huo-pao, to P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Chang, Old Mother, proprietress of an inn next door to Auntie Hsüeh's residence.

Chang Pang-ch'ang (1081–1127), minister of rites, promoted to the position of grand guardian of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, puppet emperor of the short-lived state of Ch'u for thirty-two days in 1127.

Chang the Second. See Chang Hao-wen.

Chang the Second. See Chang Mao-te.

Chang Sheng, Street-skulking Rat, "knockabout" who, along with Lu Hua, shakes down Dr. Chiang Chu-shan at the behest of Hsi-men Ch'ing; later a servant in the household of Chou Hsiu, brother-in-law of Liu the Second; murders Ch'en Ching-chi when he overhears him plotting against him and is beaten to death by Chou Hsiu at the behest of P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Chang Sheng's reincarnation. See Kao family of the Ta-hsing Guard.

Chang Sheng's wife, née Liu, sister of Liu the Second.

Chang Shih-lien, Ch'en Hung's brother-in-law, related to Yang Chien by marriage, an official in the Eastern Capital.

Chang Shih-lien's wife, née Ch'en, Ch'en Hung's elder sister.

Chang Shu-yeh (1065–1127), prefect of Chi-chou in Shantung, later pacification commissioner of Shantung, responsible for the defeat of Sung Chiang and his acceptance of a government amnesty.

Chang Sung, Little. See Shu-t'ung.

Chang Ta (d. 1126), official who dies in the defense of T'ai-yüan against the invading Chin army.

Chang, Trifler. See Chang Hsiao-hsien.

Ch'ang, Cadger. See Ch'ang Shih-chieh.

Ch'ang the Second. See Ch'ang Shih-chieh.

Ch'ang Shih-chieh, Cadger Ch'ang, Ch'ang the Second, crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten.

Ch'ang Shih-chieh's wife.

Ch'ang Shih-chieh's wife's younger brother.

Ch'ang Yü, Commandant, officer rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Chao, Auntie, go-between who sells Chin-erh to Wang Liu-erh.

Chao Chiao-erh, singing girl working out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch'ing.

Chao, Dr.. See Chao Lung-kang.

Chao Hung-tao, domestic clerk on the staff of Yang Chien.

Chao I (fl. early 12th century), Duke of Chia, twenty-sixth son of Emperor Hui-tsung by Consort Liu.

Chao K'ai (d. c. 1129), Prince of Yün, third son of emperor Hui-tsung by Consort Wang.

Chao, Lama, head priest of the Pao-ch'ing Lamasery outside the west gate of Ch'ing-ho.

Chao Lung-kang, Dr. Chao, Chao the Quack, incompetent specialist in female disorders called in to diagnose Li P'ing-erh's fatal illness.

Chao Lung-kang's grandfather.

Chao Lung-kang's father.

Chao No, investigation commissioner for Shantung.

Chao the Quack. See Chao Lung-kang.

Chao, Tailor, artisan patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Chao-ti, servant in the household of Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh.

Chao T'ing (fl. early 12th century), prefect of Hang-chou, promoted to the post of chief minister of the Court of Judicial Review.

Chao, Widow, wealthy landowner from whom Hsi-men Ch'ing buys a country estate adjacent to his ancestral graveyard.

Chao Yu-lan, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Ch'e, Hogwash. See Ch'e Tan.

Ch'e Tan, Hogwash Ch'e, a dissolute young scamp upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system.

Ch'e Tan's father, proprietor of a wineshop in Ch'ing-ho.

Ch'en An, servant in Ch'en Ching-chi's household.

Ch'en, Battalion Commander, resident on Main Street in Ch'ing-ho from whom Hsi-men Ch'ing declines to buy a coffin after the death of Li P'ing-erh.

Ch'en Cheng-hui (fl. early 12th century), son of Ch'en Kuan, surveillance vice-commissioner of education for Shantung.

Ch'en Ching-chi, secondary male protagonist of the novel, son of Ch'en Hung, husband of Hsi-men Ta-chieh, son-in-law of Hsi-men Ch'ing who carries on a running pseudo-incestuous affair with P'an Chin-lien that is consummated after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing; falls out with Wu Yüeh-niang and is evicted from the household; drives Hsi-men Ta-chieh to suicide; attempts unsuccessfully to shake down Meng Yü-lou in Yen-chou; squanders his patrimony and is reduced to beggary; accepts charity from his father's friend the philanthropist Wang Hsüan, who induces him to become a monk with the Taoist appellation Tsung-mei, the junior disciple of Abbot Jen of the Yen-kung

Temple in Lin-ch'ing; is admitted to the household of Chou Hsiu as a pretended cousin of P'ang Ch'un-mei who carries on an affair with him under her husband's nose; also has affairs with Feng Chin-pao and Han Ai-chieh, marries Ko Ts'ui-p'ing, and is murdered by Chang Sheng when he is overheard plotting against him.

Ch'en Ching-chi's grandfather, a salt merchant.

Ch'en Ching-chi's reincarnation. See Wang family of the Eastern Capital.

Ch'en, Dr., resident of Ch'ing-ho.

Ch'en, Dr.'s son, conceived as a result of a fertility potion provided by Nun Hsüeh.

Ch'en, Dr.'s wife, conceives a son in middle age after taking a fertility potion provided by Nun Hsüeh.

Ch'en Hung, wealthy dealer in pine resin, father of Ch'en Ching-chi, related by marriage to Yang Chien.

Ch'en Hung's elder sister, wife of Chang Shih-lien.

Ch'en Hung's wife, née Chang, sister of Chang Kuan, mother of Ch'en Ching-chi.

Ch'en Kuan (1057–1122), a prominent remonstrance official, father of Ch'en Cheng-hui.

Ch'en Liang-huai, national university student, son of Vice Commissioner Ch'en, friend of Ting the Second.

Ch'en, Master, legal scribe who assists Wu Sung in drafting a formal complaint against Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Ch'en, Miss, daughter of the deceased Vice Commissioner Ch'en whose assignation with Juan the Third results in his death.

Ch'en, Miss's maidservant.

Ch'en, Mistress. See Hsi-men Ta-chieh.

Ch'en the Second, proprietor of an inn at Ch'ing-chiang P'u at which Ch'en Ching-chi puts up on his way to Yen-chou.

Ch'en Ssu-chen, right provincial administration commissioner of Shantung.

Ch'en the Third, "cribber" in the licensed quarter of Lin-ch'ing.

Ch’en the Third, criminal boatman who, along with his partner Weng the Eighth, murders Miao T’ien-hsiu.

Ch’en Ting, servant in Ch’en Hung’s household.

Ch’en Ting’s wife.

Ch’en Tsung-mei. See Ch’en Ching-chi.

Ch’en Tsung-shan, ward-inspecting commandant of the Eastern Capital.

Ch’en Tung (1086–1127), national university student who submits a memorial to the throne impeaching the Six Traitors.

Ch’en, Vice-Commissioner, deceased father of Miss Ch’en.

Ch’en, Vice-Commissioner, father of Ch’en Liang-huai.

Ch’en, Vice-Commissioner’s wife, née Chang, mother of Miss Ch’en.

Ch’en Wen-chao, prefect of Tung-p’ing.

Cheng Ai-hsiang, Cheng Kuan-yin, Goddess of Mercy Cheng, singing girl from the Star of Joy Bordello in Ch’ing-ho patronized by Hua Tzu-hsü, elder sister of Cheng Ai-yüeh.

Cheng Ai-yüeh, singing girl from the Star of Joy Bordello in Ch’ing-ho patronized by Wang Ts’ai and Hsi-men Ch’ing, younger sister of Cheng Ai-hsiang.

Cheng, Auntie, madam of the Star of Joy Bordello in Ch’ing-ho.

Cheng, Battalion Commander’s family in the Eastern Capital into which Hua Tzu-hsü is reincarnated as a son.

Cheng Chi, servant in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household.

Cheng Chiao-erh, singing girl in Ch’ing-ho, niece of Cheng Ai-hsiang and Cheng Ai-yüeh.

Cheng Chin-pao. See Feng Chin-pao.

Cheng Ch’un, professional actor in Ch’ing-ho, younger brother of Cheng Feng, Cheng Ai-hsiang, and Cheng Ai-yüeh.

Cheng Chü-chung (1059–1123), military affairs commissioner, cousin of Consort Cheng, granted the title of grand guardian for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, accepts a bribe of a thousand taels of silver from Chang Mao-te to intervene with

Chu Mien and have him appointed to the position of judicial commissioner left vacant by the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Cheng, Consort, (1081–1132), a consort of Emperor Hui-tsung, niece of Madame Ch'iao.

Cheng Feng, professional actor in Ch'ing-ho, elder brother of Cheng Ai-Hsiang, Cheng Ai-yüeh, and Cheng Ch'un.

Cheng the Fifth, Auntie, madam of the Cheng Family Brothel in Lin-ch'ing.

Cheng the Fifth, Auntie's husband.

Cheng, Goddess of Mercy. See Cheng Ai-hsiang.

Cheng Kuan-yin. See Cheng Ai-hsiang.

Cheng, Third Sister, niece of Ch'iao Hung's wife, née Cheng, marries Wu K'ai's son Wu Shun-ch'en.

Cheng T'ien-shou, Palefaced Gentleman, third outlaw leader of the Ch'ing-feng Stronghold on Ch'ing-feng Mountain.

Cheng Wang. See Lai-wang.

Ch'eng-erh, younger daughter of Lai-hsing by Hui-hsiu.

Chi K'an, right administration vice commissioner of Shantung.

Chi-nan, old man from, who directs Wu Yüeh-niang to the Ling-pi Stockade in her dream.

Ch'i family brothel in Ch'ing-ho, madam of.

Ch'i Hsiang-erh, singing girl from the Ch'i family brothel in Ch'ing-ho.

Ch'i-t'ung, page boy in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household.

Chia, Duke of. See Chao I.

Chia Hsiang (fl. early 12th century), eunuch rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Chia Hsiang's adopted son, granted the post of battalion vice commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father's part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Chia Jen-ch'ing, False Feelings, neighbor of Hsi-men Ch'ing who intercedes unsuccessfully on Lai-wang's behalf.

Chia Lien, name to which Li Pang-yen alters Hsi-men Ch'ing's name on a bill of impeachment in return for a handsome bribe.

Chiang Chu-shan, Chiang Wen-hui, doctor who Li P'ing-erh marries on the rebound only to drive away ignominiously as soon as Hsi-men Ch'ing becomes available again.

Chiang Chu-shan's deceased first wife.

Chiang, Gate God. See Chiang Men-shen.

Chiang, Little, servant of Ch'en Ching-chi.

Chiang Men-shen, Gate God Chiang, elder brother of Chiang Yü-lan, gangster whose struggle with Shih En for control of the Happy Forest Tavern in Meng-chou results in his murder by Wu Sung.

Chiang Ts'ung, Sauce and Scallions, former husband of Sung Hui-lien, a cook in Ch'ing-ho who is stabbed to death in a brawl with a fellow cook over the division of their pay.

Chiang Ts'ung's assailant, convicted of a capital crime and executed as a result of Hsi-men Ch'ing's intervention.

Chiang Wen-hui. See Chiang Chu-shan.

Chiang Yü-lan, younger sister of Chiang Men-shen, concubine of Military Director-in-chief Chang of Meng-chou who assists her husband and brother in framing Wu Sung.

Ch'iao, distaff relative of the imperial family whose garden abuts on the back wall of Li P'ing-erh's house on Lion Street, assumes hereditary title of commander when Ch'iao the Fifth dies without issue.

Ch'iao Chang-chieh, infant daughter of Ch'iao Hung betrothed to Hsi-men Kuan-ko while both of them are still babes in arms.

Ch'iao, Consort, (fl. early 12th century), a consort of Emperor Hui-tsung, related to Ch'iao the Fifth.

Ch'iao the Fifth, deceased distaff relative of the imperial family through Consort Ch'iao whose hereditary title of commander passes to another branch of the family when he dies without issue.

Ch’iao the Fifth’s widow. See Ch’iao, Madame.

Ch’iao Hung, uncle of Ts’ui Pen, wealthy neighbor and business partner of Hsi-men Ch’ing whose daughter, Ch’iao Chang-chieh, is betrothed to Hsi-men Ch’ing’s son Kuan-ko while they are still babes in arms.

Ch’iao Hung’s concubine, mother of Ch’iao Chang-chieh.

Ch’iao Hung’s elder sister, Ts’ui Pen’s mother.

Ch’iao Hung’s wife, née Cheng.

Ch’iao, Madame, Ch’iao the Fifth’s widow, née Cheng, aunt of Ch’iao Hung’s wife, née Cheng, and of Consort Cheng.

Ch’iao T’ung, servant in Ch’iao Hung’s household.

Ch’iao T’ung’s wife.

Ch’iao Yün-ko, Little Yün, young fruit peddler in Ch’ing-ho who helps Wu Chih catch Hsi-men Ch’ing and P’an Chin-lien in adultery.

Ch’iao Yün-ko’s father, retired soldier dependent on his son.

Ch’ien Ch’eng, vice magistrate of Ch’ing-ho district.

Ch’ien Ch’ing-ch’uan, traveling merchant entertained by Han Tao-kuo in Yang-chou.

Ch’ien Lao, clerk of the office of punishment in Ch’ing-ho.

Ch’ien Lung-yeh, secretary of the Ministry of Revenue in charge of collecting transit duties on shipping at the Lin-ch’ing customs house.

Ch’ien, Phlegm-fire. See Ch’ien T’an-huo.

Ch’ien T’an-huo, Phlegm-fire Ch’ien, Taoist healer called in to treat Hsi-men Kuan-ko.

Chih-yün, Abbot, head priest of Hsiang-kuo Temple in K’ai-feng visited by Hsi-men Ch’ing on his trip to the Eastern Capital.

Chin, Abbot, Taoist head priest of the Temple of the Eastern Peak on Mount T’ai.

Chin Ch’ien-erh, former maidservant in the household of Huang the Fourth’s son purchased by P’ang Ch’un-mei as a servant for Ko Ts’ui-p’ing when she marries Ch’en Ching-chi.

Chin-erh, maidservant of Wang Liu-erh.

Chin-erh, singing girl in Longleg Lu's brothel on Butterfly Lane in Ch'ing-ho.

Chin-erh, singing girl working out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch'ing.

Chin-erh's father, military patrolman whose horse is fatally injured in a fall and, for lack of replacement money, is forced to sell his daughter into domestic service.

Chin-kuei, employed in Chou Hsiu's household as a wet nurse for Chou Chin-ko.

Chin-lien. See P'an Chin-lien.

Chin-lien. See Sung Hui-lien.

Chin Ta-chieh, wife of Auntie Hsüeh's son Hsüeh Chi.

Chin-ts'ai, servant in the household of Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh.

Chin Tsung-ming, senior disciple of Abbot Jen of the Yen-kung Temple in Lin-ch'ing.

Ch'in-tsung, Emperor of the Sung dynasty (r. 1125–27), son of Emperor Hui-tsung who abdicated in his favor in 1125, taken into captivity together with his father by the Chin dynasty invaders in 1127.

Ch'in-t'ung, junior page boy in the household of Hua Tzu-hsü and Li Ping-erh, originally named T'ien-fu but renamed when she marries into the household of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Ch'in-t'ung, page boy of Meng Yü-lou who is seduced by P'an Chin-lien and driven out of the household when the affair is discovered.

Ch'in Yü-chih, singing girl in Ch'ing-ho patronized by Wang Ts'ai.

Ching-chi. See Ch'en Ching-chi.

Ching Chung, commander of the left battalion of the Ch'ing-ho Guard, later promoted to the post of military director-in-chief of Chi-chou, and finally to commander-general of the southeast and concurrently grain transport commander.

Ching Chung's daughter for whom he seeks a marriage alliance with Hsi-men Kuan-ko but is refused by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Ching Chung's mother.

Ching Chung's wife.

Ch'iu-chü, Autumn Chrysanthemum, much abused junior maidservant of P'an Chin-lien.

Cho the Second. See Cho Tiu-erh.

Cho Tiu-erh, Cho the second, Toss-off Cho, unlicensed prostitute in Ch'ing-ho maintained as a mistress by Hsi-men Ch'ing and subsequently brought into his household as his Third Lady only to sicken and die soon thereafter.

Cho, Toss-off. See Cho Tiu-erh.

Chou, Censor, neighbor of Wu Yüeh-niang's when she was growing up, father of Miss Chou.

Chou Chin-ko, son of Chou Hsiu by P'ang Ch'un-mei the real father of which may have been Ch'en Ching-chi.

Chou Chung, senior servant in the household of Chou Hsiu, father of Chou Jen and Chou I.

Chou, Eunuch Director, resident of Ch'ing-ho whose invitation to a party Hsi-men Ch'ing declines not long before his death.

Chou Hsiao-erh, patron of Li Kuei-ch'ing and probably of Li Kuei-chieh also.

Chou Hsiu, commandant of the Regional Military Command, later appointed to other high military posts, colleague of Hsi-men Ch'ing after whose death he buys P'ang Ch'un-mei as a concubine and later promotes her to the position of principle wife when she bears him a son; commander-general of the Shantung region who leads the forces of Ch'ing-yen against the Chin invaders and dies at Kao-yang Pass of an arrow wound inflicted by the Chin commander Wan-yen Tsung-wang.

Chou Hsiu's first wife, blind in one eye, who dies not long after P'ang Ch'un-mei enters his household as a concubine.

Chou Hsiu's reincarnation. See Shen Shou-shan.

Chou Hsüan, cousin of Chou Hsiu's who looks after his affairs while he is at the front.

Chou I, servant in Chou Hsiu's household, son of Chou Chung and younger brother of Chou Jen, clandestine lover of P'ang Ch'un-

mei who dies in the act of intercourse with him.

Chou I's paternal aunt with whom he seeks refuge after the death of P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Chou I's reincarnation. See Kao Liu-chu.

Chou Jen, servant in Chou Hsiu's household, son of Chou Chung and elder brother of Chou I.

Chou, Little, itinerant barber and masseur in Ch'ing-ho patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Chou, Miss, daughter of Censor Chou, neighbor of Wu Yüeh-niang's when she was growing up who broke her hymen by falling from a standing position onto the seat of a swing.

Chou, Ms., widowed second wife of Sung Te's father-in-law who commits adultery with him after her husband's death, for which Hsi-men Ch'ing sentences them both to death by strangulation.

Chou, Ms.'s maidservant.

Chou, Ms.'s mother.

Chou the Second, friend of Juan the Third.

Chou Shun, professional actor from Su-chou who specializes in playing female lead parts.

Chou Ts'ai, professional boy actor in Ch'ing-ho.

Chou Yü-chieh, daughter of Chou Hsiu by his concubine Sun Erh-niang.

Chu Ai-ai, Love, singing girl from Greenhorn Chu's brothel on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho, daughter of Greenhorn Chu.

Chu, Battalion Commander, resident of Ch'ing-ho, father of Miss Chu.

Chu, Battalion Commander's deceased wife, mother of Miss Chu.

Chu, Censor, resident of Ch'ing-ho, neighbor of Ch'iao Hung.

Chu, Censor's wife.

Chu family of the Eastern Capital, family into which Sung Hui-lien is reincarnated as a daughter.

Chu, Greenhorn, proprietor of a brothel on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho situated next door to the Verdant

Spring Bordello of Auntie Li the Third.

Chu Jih-nien, Sticky Chu, Pockmarked Chu, crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten, plays the tout to Wang Ts'ai on his visits to the licensed quarter.

Chu Mien (1075–1126), defender-in-chief of the Embroidered Uniform Guard, an elite unit of the Imperial Bodyguard that performed secret police functions; relative of Li Ta-t'ien, the district magistrate of Ch'ing-ho; chief mover behind the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, for which service to the throne he is promoted to a series of high posts; one of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch'en Tung.

Chu Mien's majordomo.

Chu Mien's son, granted the post of battalion commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father's part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Chu, Miss, daughter of Battalion Commander Chu.

Chu, Pockmarked. See Chu Jih-nien.

Chu, Sticky. See Chu Jih-nien.

Ch'u-yün, daughter of a battalion commander of the Yang-chou Guard purchased by Miao Ch'ing to send as a gift to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Ch'u-yün's father, battalion commander of the Yang-chou Guard.

Ch'un-hsiang, maidservant in the household of Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh.

Ch'un-hua, concubine of Ying Po-chüeh and mother of his younger son.

Ch'un-hung, page boy in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household.

Ch'un-mei. See P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Chung-ch'iu, junior maidservant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household serving at various times Hsi-men Ta-chieh, Sun Hsüeh-o, and Wu Yüeh-niang.

Chung Kuei, policeman from outside the city wall of the Eastern Capital into whose family Hsi-men Ta-chieh is reincarnated as a daughter.

Ch'ung-hsi, maidservant purchased by Ch'en Ching-chi to serve Feng Chin-pao.

Ch'ung Shih-tao (1051–1126), general-in-chief of the Sung armies defending against the Chin invaders.

Ch'ü, Midwife, maternal aunt of Lai-wang in whose house on Polished Rice Lane outside the east gate of Ch'ing-ho Lai-wang and Sun Hsüeh-o seek refuge after absconding from the Hsi-men household.

Ch'ü T'ang, son of Midwife Ch'ü, cousin of Lai-wang.

Coal in the Snow. See P'an Chin-lien's cat.

Died-of-fright, Miss, wife of Yang Kuang-yen.

False Feelings. See Chia Jen-ch'ing.

Fan family of Hsü-chou, peasant family into which Wu Chih is reincarnated as a son.

Fan Hsün, battalion commander in the Ch'ing-ho Guard.

Fan, Hundred Customers. See Fan Pai-chia-nu.

Fan Kang, next-door neighbor of Ch'en Ching-chi in Ch'ing-ho.

Fan, Old Man, neighbor of the Hsieh Family Tavern in Lin-ch'ing.

Fan Pai-chia-nu, Hundred Customers Fan, singing girl from the Fan Family Brothel in Ch'ing-ho.

Fang Chen (fl. early 12th century), erudite of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices who reports that a brick in the Imperial Ancestral Temple is oozing blood.

Fang La (d. 1121), rebel who set up an independent regime in the southeast which was suppressed by government troops in 1121.

Feng Chin-pao, Cheng Chin-pao, singing girl from the Feng Family Brothel in Lin-ch'ing purchased as a concubine by Ch'en Ching-chi, later resold to the brothel of Auntie Cheng the Fifth who changes her name to Cheng Chin-pao.

Feng Chin-pao's mother, madam of the Feng Family Brothel in Lin-ch'ing.

Feng, Consort (fl. mid 11th-early 12th century), Consort Tuan, consort of Emperor Jen-tsung (r. 1022–63) who resided in the palace for five reigns.

Feng Family Brothel's servant.

Feng Huai, son of Feng the Second, son-in-law of Pai the Fifth, dies of injuries sustained in an affray with Sun Wen-hsiang.

Feng, Old Mother, waiting woman in Li P'ing-erh's family since she was a child, continues in her service when she is a concubine of Privy Councilor Liang Shih-chieh, wife of Hua Tzu-hsü, wife of Chiang Chu-shan, and after she marries Hsi-men Ch'ing, supplementing her income by working as a go-between on the side.

Feng the Second, employee of Sun Ch'ing, father of Feng Huai.

Feng T'ing-hu, left assistant administration commissioner of Shantung.

Fifth Lady. See P'an Chin-lien.

First Lady. See Wu Yüeh-niang.

Fisherman who rescues An-t'ung and helps him to locate the boatmen who had murdered his master.

Flying Demon. See Hou Lin.

Fourth Lady. See Sun Hsüeh-o.

Fu-jung, maidservant of Lady Lin.

Fu, Manager. See Fu Ming.

Fu Ming, Fu the Second, Manager Fu, manager of Hsi-men Ch'ing's pharmaceutical shop, pawnshop, and other businesses.

Fu Ming's wife.

Fu the Second. See Fu Ming.

Fu T'ien-tse, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Golden Lotus. See P'an Chin-lien.

Good Deed. See Yin Chih.

Hai-t'ang, concubine of Chou Hsiu much abused by P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Han Ai-chieh, daughter of Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh, niece of Han the Second, concubine of Chai Ch'ien, mistress of Ch'en Ching-chi to whom she remains faithful after his death, ending her life as a Buddhist nun.

Han, Auntie, wife of Mohammedan Han, mother of Han Hsiao-yü.

Han, Baldy, father of Han Tao-kuo and Han the Second.

Han, Brother-in-law. See Han Ming-ch'uan.

Han Chin-ch'uan, singing girl in Ch'ing-ho, elder sister of Han Yü-ch'uan, younger sister of Han Pi.

Han Hsiao-ch'ou, singing girl in Ch'ing-ho, niece of Han Chin-ch'uan and Han Yü-ch'uan.

Han Hsiao-yü, son of Mohammedan Han and Auntie Han.

Han Lü (fl. early 12th century), vice-minister of the Ministry of Revenue, vice-minister of the Ministry of Personnel, brother-in-law of Ts'ai Ching's youngest son, Ts'ai T'ao, grants Hsi-men Ch'ing favorable treatment for his speculations in the salt trade.

Han, Master, formerly a court painter attached to the Hsüan-ho Academy, called upon by Hsi-men Ch'ing to paint two posthumous portraits of Li P'ing-erh.

Han Ming-ch'uan, Brother-in-law Han, husband of Meng Yü-lou's elder sister who lives outside the city gate of Ch'ing-ho; friend of Dr. Jen Hou-ch'i.

Han Ming-ch'uan's wife, née Meng, Mrs. Han, elder sister of Meng Yü-lou.

Han, Mohammedan, husband of Auntie Han, father of Han Hsiao-yü, renter of a room on the street front of Hsi-men Ch'ing's property next door to that of Pen Ti-ch'uan and his wife, employed on the staff of the eunuch director in charge of the local Imperial Stables.

Han, Mrs. See Han Ming-ch'uan's wife, née Meng.

Han Pang-ch'i, prefect of Hsü-chou.

Han Pi, professional boy actor in Ch'ing-ho, elder brother of Han Chin-ch'uan and Han Yü-ch'uan.

Han, Posturer. See Han Tao-kuo.

Han the Second, Trickster Han, younger brother of Han Tao-kuo, “knockabout” and gambler in Ch’ing-ho who carries on an intermittent affair with his sister-in-law, Wang Liu-erh, whom he marries after the death of Han Tao-kuo.

Han Tao-kuo, Posturer Han, husband of Wang Liu-erh, son of Baldy Han, elder brother of Han the Second, father of Han Ai-chieh, manager of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s silk store on Lion Street who absconds with a thousand taels of his property on hearing of his death, content to live off the sexual earnings of his wife and daughter.

Han Tao-kuo’s paternal uncle, elder brother of Baldy Han.

Han, Trickster. See Han the Second.

Han Tso, boy actor in Ch’ing-ho.

Han Tsung-jen, domestic clerk on the staff of Yang Chien.

Han Wen-kuang, investigation commissioner for Shantung.

Han Yü-ch’uan, singing girl in Ch’ing-ho, younger sister of Han Chin-ch’uan and Han Pi.

Hao Hsien, Idler Hao, a dissolute young scamp upon whom Hsi-men Ch’ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system.

Hao, Idler. See Hao Hsien.

Ho Ch’i-kao, left administration vice commissioner of Shantung.

Ho Chin, assistant judicial commissioner of the Ch’ing-ho office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, promoted to the post of commander of Hsin-p’ing Stockade and later to the post of judicial commissioner in the Huai-an office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, thereby creating the vacancy filled by Hsi-men Ch’ing in return for the lavishness of his birthday presents to Ts’ai Ching.

Ho Chin-ch’an, singing girl from the Ho Family Bordello on Fourth Street in the licensed quarter of Ch’ing-ho.

Ho Ch’in, son of Ho the Ninth who succeeds to his position as head coroner’s assistant of Ch’ing-ho.

Ho Ch’un-ch’üan, Dr. Ho, son of Old Man Ho, physician in Ch’ing-ho.

Ho, Dr. See Ho Ch’un-ch’üan.

Ho, Eunuch Director. See Ho Hsin.

Ho Hsin (fl. early 12th century), Eunuch Director Ho, attendant in the Yenning Palace, residence of Consort Feng, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, uncle of Ho Yung-shou, entertains Hsi-men Ch’ing on his visit to the Eastern Capital.

Ho-hua, maidservant of Chou Hsiu’s concubine Sun Erh-niang.

Ho Liang-feng, younger brother of Magnate Ho.

Ho, Magnate, wealthy silk merchant from Hu-chou, elder brother of Ho Liang-feng, tries to buy P’an Chin-lien after the death of Hsi-men Ch’ing, patronizes Wang Liu-erh in Lin-ch’ing and takes her and Han Tao-kuo back to Hu-chou where they inherit his property.

Ho, Magnate’s daughter.

Ho the Ninth, elder brother of Ho the Tenth, head coroner’s assistant of Ch’ing-ho who accepts a bribe from Hsi-men Ch’ing to cover up the murder of Wu Chih.

Ho, Old Man, father of Ho Ch’un-ch’üan, aged physician in Ch’ing-ho.

Ho Pu-wei, clerk on the staff of the district magistrate of Ch’ing-ho, Li Ch’ang-ch’i, who assists his son Li Kung-pi in his courtship of Meng Yü-lou.

Ho the Tenth, younger brother of Ho the Ninth, let off the hook by Hsi-men Ch’ing when he is accused of fencing stolen goods.

Ho Yung-fu, nephew of Ho Hsin, younger brother of Ho Yung-shou.

Ho Yung-shou, nephew of Ho Hsin, elder brother of Ho Yung-fu, appointed to Hsi-men Ch’ing’s former post as assistant judicial commissioner in the Ch’ing-ho office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission as a reward for Ho Hsin’s part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Ho Yung-shou’s wife, née Lan, niece of Lan Ts’ung-hsi.

Hou Lin, Flying Demon, beggar boss in Ch'ing-ho who helps out Ch'en Ching-chi when he is reduced to beggary in return for his sexual favors.

Hou Meng (1054–1121), grand coordinator of Shantung, promoted to the post of chief minister of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Hsi-erh, page boy in the household of Chou Hsiu.

Hsi-men An. See Tai-an.

Hsi-men Ching-liang, Hsi-men Ch'ing's grandfather.

Hsi-men Ch'ing, principal male protagonist of the novel, father of Hsi-men Ta-chieh by his deceased first wife, née Ch'en, father of Hsi-men Kuan-ko by Li P'ing-erh, father of Hsi-men Hsiao-ko by Wu Yüeh-niang, decadent scion of a merchant family of some wealth from which he inherits a wholesale pharmaceutical business on the street in front of the district yamen of Ch'ing-ho, climbs in social status by means of a succession of corrupt sexual, economic, and political conquests only to die of sexual excess at the age of thirty-three.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's daughter. See Hsi-men Ta-chieh.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's first wife, née Ch'en, deceased mother of Hsi-men Ta-chieh.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's father. See Hsi-men Ta.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's grandfather. See Hsi-men Ching-liang.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's grandmother, née Li.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's mother, née Hsia.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's reincarnation. See Hsi-men Hsiao-ko and Shen Yüeh.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's sons. See Hsi-men Kuan-ko and Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Hsi-men Hsiao-ko, posthumous son of Hsi-men Ch'ing by Wu Yüeh-niang, born at the very moment of his death, betrothed while still a babe in arms to Yün Li-shou's daughter, claimed by the Buddhist monk P'u-ching to be the reincarnation of Hsi-men Ch'ing and

spirited away by him at the end of the novel to become a celibate monk with the religious name Ming-wu.

Hsi-men Kuan-ko, son of Hsi-men Ch'ing by Li P'ing-erh, given the religious name Wu Ying-yüan by the Taoist priest Wu Tsung-che, betrothed while still a babe in arms to Ch'iao Chang-chieh, murdered by P'an Chin-lien out of jealousy of Li P'ing-erh.

Hsi-men Kuan-ko's reincarnation. See Wang family of Cheng-chou.

Hsi-men Ta, deceased father of Hsi-men Ch'ing whose business took him to many parts of China.

Hsi-men Ta-chieh, Mistress Ch'en, Hsi-men Ch'ing's daughter by his deceased first wife, née Ch'en, wife of Ch'en Ching-chi, so neglected and abused by her husband that she commits suicide.

Hsi-men Ta-chieh's reincarnation. See Chung Kuei.

Hsi-t'ung, page boy in the household of Wang Hsüan.

Hsiao-ko. See Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Hsia Ch'eng-en, son of Hsia Yen-ling, achieves status of military selectee by hiring a stand-in to take the qualifying examination for him.

Hsia-hua, junior maidservant of Li Chiao-erh who is caught trying to steal a gold bracelet.

Hsia Kung-chi, docket officer on the staff of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho.

Hsia Shou, servant in the household of Hsia Yen-ling.

Hsia Yen-ling, judicial commissioner in the Ch'ing-ho office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, colleague, superior, and rival of Hsi-men Ch'ing in his official career.

Hsia Yen-ling's son. See Hsia Ch'eng-en.

Hsia Yen-ling's wife.

Hsiang the Elder, deceased distaff relative of the imperial family through Empress Hsiang, consort of Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067–85), elder brother of Hsiang the fifth.

Hsiang, Empress, (1046–1101), consort of Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067–85).

Hsiang the Fifth, distaff relative of the imperial family through Empress Hsiang, consort of Emperor Shen-tsung (r. 1067–85), younger brother of Hsiang the Elder, sells part of his country estate outside Ch'ing-ho to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Hsiao Chang-hsien. See Chang Hsiao-hsein.

Hsiao Ch'eng, resident of Oxhide Street and neighborhood head of the fourth neighborhood of the first subprecinct of Ch'ing-ho.

Hsiao-ko. See Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Hsiao-luan, junior maidservant of Meng Yü-lou.

Hsiao-yü, Little Jade, junior maidservant of Wu Yüeh-niang, married to Tai-an after Wu Yüeh-niang discovers them in flagrante delicto.

Hsiao-yüeh, Abbot, head priest of the Water Moon Monastery outside the south gate of Ch'ing-ho.

Hsieh En, assistant judicial commissioner of the Huai-ch'ing office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission.

Hsieh, Fatty. See Hsieh the Third.

Hsieh Hsi-ta, Tagalong Hsieh, crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten.

Hsieh Hsi-ta's father, deceased hereditary battalion commander in the Ch'ing-ho Guard.

Hsieh Hsi-ta's mother.

Hsieh Hsi-ta's wife, née Liu.

Hsieh Ju-huang, What a Whopper, acquaintance of Han Tao-kuo who punctures his balloon when he inflates his own importance.

Hsieh, Tagalong. See Hsieh Hsi-ta.

Hsieh the Third, Fatty Hsieh, manager of the Hsieh Family Tavern in Lin-ch'ing.

Hsin Hsing-tsung (fl. early 12th century), commander-general of the Ho-nan region who leads the forces of Chang-te against the Chin invaders.

Hsiu-ch'un, junior maidservant of Li P'ing-erh and later of Li Chiao-erh, finally becoming a novice nun under the tutelage of Nun Wang.

Hsiung Wang, husband of Chang Ju-i, soldier forced by his lack of means to sell his wife to Hsi-men Ch'ing as a wet nurse for Kuan-ko.

Hsiung Wang's son by Chang Ju-i.

Hsü, Assistant Administration Commissioner, of Yen-chou in Shantung.

Hsü-chou, old woman from, in whose house Han Ai-chieh encounters Han the Second.

Hsü, Eunuch Director, wealthy eunuch speculator and moneylender, resident of Halfside Street in the northern quarter of Ch'ing-ho, landlord of Crooked-head Sun and Aunt Yang, patron of Li Ming, original owner of Hsia Yen-ling's residential compound, major rival of Hsi-men Ch'ing in the social world of Ch'ing-ho whose niece marries Chang Mao-te's son.

Hsü, Eunuch Director's niece, marries Chang Mao-te's son.

Hsü Feng, prefect of Yen-chou in Chekiang who exposes Meng Yü-lou's and Li Kung-pi's attempt to frame Ch'en Ching-chi.

Hsü Feng's trusted henchman who disguises himself as a convict in order to elicit information from Ch'en Ching-chi.

Hsü Feng-hsiang, supervisor of the State Farm Battalion of the Ch'ing-ho Guard, one of the officials who comes to Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence to offer a sacrifice to the soul of Li P'ing-erh after her death.

Hsü the Fourth, shopkeeper outside the city wall of Ch'ing-ho who borrows money from Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Hsü Hsiang, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Hsü, Master, yin-yang master of Ch'ing-ho.

Hsü Nan-ch'i, military officer in Ch'ing-ho promoted to the post of commander of the Hsin-p'ing Stockade.

Hsü, Prefect, prefect of Ch'ing-chou, patron of Shih Po-ts'ai, the corrupt Taoist head priest of the Temple of the Goddess of Iridescent Clouds on the summit of Mout T'ai.

Hsü, Prefect's daughter.

Hsü, Prefect's son.

Hsü, Prefect's wife.

Hsü Pu-yü, Reneger Hsü, moneylender in Ch'ing-ho from whom Wang Ts'ai tries to borrow three hundred taels of silver in order to purchase a position in the Military School.

Hsü, Reneger. See Hsü Pu-yü.

Hsü Shun, professional actor of Hai-yen style drama.

Hsü Sung, prefect of Tung-ch'ang in Shantung.

Hsü Sung's concubine.

Hsü Sung's concubine's father.

Hsü, Tailor, artisan with a shop across the street from Han Tao-kuo's residence on Lion Street in Ch'ing-ho.

Hsü the Third, seller of date cakes in front of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho.

Hsü Tsung-shun, junior disciple of Abbot Jen of the Yen-kung Temple in Lin-ch'ing.

Hsüeh, Auntie, go-between in Ch'ing-ho who also peddles costume jewelry, mother of Hsüeh Chi, sells P'ang Ch'un-mei into Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, represents Hsi-men Ch'ing in the betrothal of his daughter Hsi-men Ta-chieh to Ch'en Ching-chi, proposes his match with Meng Yü-lou, arranges resale of P'ang Ch'un-mei to Chou Hsiu after she is forced to leave the Hsi-men household by Wu Yüeh-niang, arranges match between Ch'en Ching-chi and Ko Ts'ui-p'ing after Hsi-men Ta-chieh's suicide.

Hsüeh, Auntie's husband.

Hsüeh Chi, son of Auntie Hsüeh, husband of Chin ta-chieh.

Hsüeh Chi's son by Chin Ta-chieh.

Hsüeh, Eunuch Director, supervisor of the imperial estates in the Ch'ing-ho region, despite his castration given to fondling and pinching the singing girls with whom he comes in contact.

Hsüeh Hsien-chung, official rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Hsüeh, Nun, widow of a peddler of steamed wheat cakes living across the street from the Kuang-ch'eng Monastery in Ch'ing-ho who took the tonsure after the death of her husband and became abbess of the Ksitigarbha Nunnery, defrocked for her complicity in the death of Juan the Third, later rector of the Lotus Blossom Nunnery in the southern quarter of Ch'ing-ho who provides first Wu Yüeh-niang and then P'an Chin-lien with fertility potions, frequently invited to recite Buddhist "precious scrolls" to Wu Yüeh-niang and her guests.

Hsüeh, Nun's deceased husband, peddler of steamed wheat cakes living across the street from the Kuang-ch'eng Monastery in Ch'ing-ho.

Hsüeh-o. See Sun Hsüeh-o.

Hsüeh Ts'un-erh, unlicensed prostitute in Longfoot Wu's brothel in the Southern Entertainment Quarter of Ch'ing-ho patronized by P'ing-an after he absconds from the Hsi-men household with jewelry stolen from the pawnshop.

Hu, Dr., Old Man Hu, Hu the Quack, physician who lives in Eunuch Director Liu's house on East Street in Ch'ing-ho in the rear courtyard of which Hsi-men Ch'ing hides in order to evade Wu Sung, treats Hua Tzu-hsü, Li P'ing-erh, and Hsi-men Ch'ing without success, prescribes abortifacient for P'an Chin-lien when she becomes pregnant by Ch'en Ching-chi.

Hu, Dr's maidservant.

Hu the Fourth, impeached as a relative or adherent of Yang Chien.

Hu Hsiu, employee of Han Tao-kuo who spies on Hsi-men Ch'ing's lovemaking with Wang Liu-erh, accompanies his employer on his buying expeditions to the south, and tells him what he thinks about his private life in a drunken tirade in Yang-chou.

Hu, Old Man. See Hu, Dr.

Hu the Quack. See Hu, Dr.

Hu Shih-wen (fl. early 12th century), related to Ts'ai Ching by marriage, corrupt prefect of Tung-p'ing in Shantung who participates with Hsi-men Ch'ing and Hsia Yen-ling in getting

Miao Ch'ing off the hook for murdering his master Miao T'ien-hsiu.

Hu Ts'ao, professional actor from Su-chou who specializes in playing young male lead roles.

Hua the Elder. See Hua Tzu-yu.

Hua, Eunuch Director, uncle of Hua Tzu-yu, Hua Tzu-hsü, Hua Tzu-kuang, and Hua Tzu-hua and adoptive father of Hua Tzu-hsü, member of the Imperial Bodyguard and director of the Firewood Office in the Imperial Palace, later promoted to the position of grand defender of Kuang-nan from which post he retires on account of illness to take up residence in his native place, Ch'ing-ho; despite his castration engaged in pseudo-incestuous hanky-panky with his daughter-in-law, Li P'ing-erh.

Hua the Fourth. See Hua Tzu-hua.

Hua Ho-lu, assistant magistrate of Ch'ing-ho.

Hua, Mistress. See Li P'ing-erh.

Hua, Mrs. See Li P'ing-erh.

Hua, Nobody. See Hua Tzu-hsü.

Hua the Second. See Hua Tzu-hsü.

Hua the Third. See Hua Tzu-kuang.

Hua-t'ung, page boy in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household sodomized by Wen Pi-ku.

Hua Tzu-hsü, Hua the Second, Nobody Hua, nephew and adopted son of Eunuch Director Hua, husband of Li P'ing-erh, next door neighbor of Hsi-men Ch'ing and member of the brotherhood of ten, patron of Wu Yin-erh and Cheng Ai-hsiang; cuckolded by Li P'ing-erh, who turns over much of his property to Hsi-men Ch'ing, he loses the rest in a lawsuit and dies of chagrin.

Hua Tzu-hsü's reincarnation. See Cheng, Battalion Commander's family in the Eastern Capital.

Hua Tzu-hua, Hua the Fourth, nephew of Eunuch Director Hua, brother of Hua Tzu-hsü.

Hua Tzu-hua's wife.

Hua Tzu-kuang, Hua the Third, nephew of Eunuch Director Hua, brother of Hua Tzu-hsü.

Hua Tzu-kuang's wife.

Hua Tzu-yu, Hua the Elder, nephew of Eunuch Director Hua, brother of Hua Tzu-hsü.

Hua Tzu-yu's wife.

Huia River region, merchant from, who employs Wang Ch'ao.

Huai Rvier region, merchant from, who patronizes Li Kuei-ch'ing.

Huang An, military commander involved with T'an Chen in defense of the northern frontier against the Chin army.

Huang, Buddhist Superior, monk of the Pao-en Temple in Ch'ing-ho.

Huang Chia, prefect of Teng-chou in Shantung.

Huang Ching-ch'en (d. 1126), defender-in-chief of the Palace Command, eunuch rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, uncle of Wang Ts'ai's wife, née Huang, lavishly entertained by Hsi-men Ch'ing at the request of Sung Ch'iao-nien.

Huang Ching-ch'en's adopted son, granted the post of battalion commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father's part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Huang the Fourth, merchant contractor in Ch'ing-ho, partner of Li Chih, ends up in prison for misappropriation of funds.

Huang the Fourth's son.

Huang the Fourth's wife, née Sun, daughter of Sun Ch'ing.

Huang-lung Temple, abbot of, entertains Hsi-men Ch'ing and Ho Yung-shou en route to Ch'ing-ho from the Eastern Capital.

Huang, Master, fortune teller residing outside the Chen-wu Temple in the northern quarter of Ch'ing-ho.

Huang Mei, assistant prefect of K'ai-feng, maternal cousin of Miao T'ien-hsiu who invites him to visit him in the capital and appeals to Tseng Hsiao-hsü on his behalf after his murder.

Huang Ning, page boy in the household of Huang the Fourth.

Huang Pao-kuang (fl. early 12th century), secretary of the Ministry of Works in charge of the Imperial Brickyard in Ch'ing-ho, provincial graduate of the same year as Shang Hsiao-t'ang.

Huang, Perfect Man. See Huang Yüan-pai.

Huang Yü, foreman on the staff of Wang Fu.

Huang Yüan-pai, Perfect Man Huang, Taoist priest sent by the court to officiate at a seven-day rite of cosmic renewal on Mount T'ai, also officiates at a rite of purification for the salvation of the soul of Li P'ing-erh.

Hui-ch'ing, "The Beanpole," wife of Lai-chao, mother of Little Iron Rod.

Hui-hsiang, wife of Lai-pao, née Liu, mother of Seng-pao.

Hui-hsiang's elder sister.

Hui-hsiang's mother.

Hui-hsiang's younger brother. See Liu Ts'ang.

Hui-hsiu, wife of Lai-hsing, mother of Nien-erh and Ch'eng-erh.

Hui-lien. See Sung Hui-lien.

Hui-tsung, Emperor of the Sung dynasty (r. 1100–25), father of Emperor Ch'in-tsung in whose favor he abdicated in 1125, taken into captivity together with his son by the Chin invaders in 1127.

Hui-yüan, wife of Lai-chüeh.

Hung, Auntie, madam of the Hung Family Brothel in Ch'ing-ho.

Hung the Fourth, singing girl from the Hung Family Brothel in Ch'ing-ho.

Hung-hua Temple in Ch'ing-ho, monk from, whom Hsi-men Ch'ing frames and executes in place of Ho the Tenth.

Huo-pao, eleven-year-old country girl offered to P'ang Ch'un-mei as a maidservant but rejected for wetting her bed.

Huo-pao's parents.

Huo Ta-li, district magistrate of Ch'ing-ho who accepts Ch'en Ching-chi's bribe and lets him off the hook when accused of driving his wife, Hsi-men Ta-chieh, to suicide.

I Mien-tz'u, Ostensibly Benign, neighbor of Hsi-men Ch'ing who intercedes unsuccessfully on Lai-wang's behalf.

Imperial Stables in Ch'ing-ho, eunuch director of, employer of Mohammedan Han.

Indian monk. See Monk, Indian.

Iron Fingernail. See Yang Kuang-yen.

Iron Rod. See Little Iron Rod.

Itinerant acrobat called in by Chou Hsiu to distract P'ang Ch'un-mei from her grief over the death of P'an Chin-lien.

Jade Flute. See Yü-hsiao.

Jade Lotus. See Pai Yü-lien.

Jen, Abbot, Taoist priest of the Yen-kung Temple in Lin-ch'ing to whom Wang Hsüan recommends Ch'en Ching-chi as a disciple; dies of shock when threatened with arrest in connection with the latter's whoremongering.

Jen, Abbot's acolyte.

Jen Hou-ch'i, Dr. Jen, physician in Ch'ing-ho who treats Li P'ing-erh and Hsi-men Ch'ing without success, friend of Han Ming-ch'uan.

Jen T'ing-kuei, assistant magistrate of Ch'ing-ho.

Ju-i. See Chang Ju-i.

Juan the Third, dies of excitement in the act of making love to Miss Ch'en in the Ksitigarbha Nunnery during an assignation arranged by Nun Hsüeh.

Juan the Third's parents.

Jui-yün. See Pen Chang-chieh.

Jung Chiao-erh, singing girl in Ch'ing-ho patronized by Wang Ts'ai.

Jung Hai, employee of Hsi-men Ch'ing who accompanies Ts'ui Pen on a buying trip to Hu-chou.

Kan Jun, resident of Stonebridge Alley in Ch'ing-ho, partner and manager of Hsi-men Ch'ing's silk dry goods store.

Kan Jun's wife.

Kan Lai-hsing. See Lai-hsing.

K'ang, Prince of. See Kao-tsung, Emperor.

Kao An, secondary majordomo of Ts'ai Ching's household in the Eastern Capital through whom Lai-pao gains access to Ts'ai Yu.

Kao Ch'iu (d. 1126), defender-in-chief of the Imperial Bodyguard, granted the title of grand guardian for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park; one of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch'en Tung.

Kao family from outside the city wall of the Eastern Capital, family into which Chou I is reincarnated as a son named Kao Liu-chu.

Kao family of the Ta-hsing Guard, family into which Chang Sheng is reincarnated as a son.

Kao Lien, cousin of Kao Ch'iu, prefect of T'ai-an, brother-in-law of Yin T'ien-hsi.

Kao Lien's wife, née Yin, elder sister of Yin T'ien-hsi.

Kao Liu-chu, son of the Kao family from outside the city wall of the Eastern Capital, reincarnation of Chou I.

Kao-tsung, Emperor of the Southern Sung dynasty (r. 1127–1162), ninth son of Emperor Hui-tsung, Prince of K'ang; declares himself emperor in 1127 when the Chin invaders took emperors Hui-tsung and Ch'in-tsung into captivity; abdicates in favor of emperor Hsiao-tsung in 1162.

Ko Ts'ui-p'ing, wife of Ch'en Ching-chi in a marriage arranged by P'ang Ch'un-mei with whom he continues to carry on an intermittent affair; returns to her parents' family after Ch'en Ching-chi's death and the invasion by the Chin armies.

Ko Ts'ui-p'ing's father, wealthy silk dry goods dealer in Ch'ing-ho.

Ko Ts'ui-p'ing's mother.

Kou Tzu-hsiao, professional actor from Su-chou who specializes in playing male lead roles.

Ku, Silversmith, jeweler in Ch'ing-ho patronized by Li P'ing-erh and Hsi-men Ch'ing, employer of Lai-wang after he returns to Ch'ing-ho from exile in Hsü-chou.

Kuan, Busybody. See Kuan Shih-k'uan.

Kuan-ko. See Hsi-men Kuan-ko.

Kuan Shih-k'uan, Busybody Kuan, a dissolute young scamp upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system.

Kuan-yin Nunnery, abbess of, superior of Nun Wang, frequent visitor in the Hsi-men household.

Kuang-yang, Commandery Prince of. See T'ung Kuan.

Kuei-chieh. See Li Kuei-chieh.

Kuei-ch'ing. See Li Kuei-ch'ing.

Kung Kuai (1057–1111), left provincial administration commissioner of Shantung.

K'ung, Auntie, go-between in Ch'ing-ho who represents Ch'iao Hung's family in arranging the betrothal of Ch'iao Chang-chieh to Hsi-men Kuan-ko.

K'ung family of the Eastern Capital, family into which P'ang Ch'un-mei is reincarnated as a daughter.

Kuo Shou-ch'ing, senior disciple of Shih Po-ts'ai, the corrupt Taoist head priest of the Temple of the Goddess of Iridescent Clouds on the summit of Mount T'ai.

Kuo Shou-li, junior disciple of Shih Po-ts'ai, the corrupt Taoist head priest of the Temple of the Goddess of Iridescent Clouds on the summit of Mount T'ai.

Kuo Yao-shih (d. after 1126), turncoat who accepts office under the Sung dynasty but goes over to the Chin side at a critical point and is instrumental in their conquest of north China.

La-mei, maidservant employed in the Wu Family Brothel in Ch'ing-ho.

Lai-an, servant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household.

Lai-chao, Liu Chao, head servant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, husband of Hui-ch'ing, father of Little Iron Rod, helps Lai-wang to abscond with Sun Hsüeh-o.

Lai-chao's son. See Little Iron Rod.

Lai-chao's wife. See Hui-ch'ing.

Lai-chüeh, Lai-yu, husband of Hui-yüan, originally servant in the household of a distaff relative of the imperial family named

Wang, loses his position on exposure of his wife's affair with her employer, recommended as a servant to Hsi-men Ch'ing by his friend Ying Pao, the son of Ying Po-chüeh.

Lai-chüeh's deceased parents.

Lai-chüeh's wife. See Hui-yüan.

Lai-hsing, Kan Lai-hsing, servant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, originally recruited by Hsi-men Ch'ing's father while traveling on business in Kan-chou, husband of Hui-hsiu, father of Nien-erh and Ch'eng-erh, helps to frame Lai-wang for attempted murder, married to Chang Ju-i after the death of Hui-hsiu.

Lai-pao, T'ang Pao, servant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household often relied upon for important missions to the capital, husband of Hui-hsiang, father of Seng-pao, appointed to the post of commandant on the staff of the Prince of Yün in return for his part in delivering birthday presents from Hsi-men Ch'ing to Ts'ai Ching, embezzles Hsi-men Ch'ing's property after his death and makes unsuccessful sexual advances to Wu Yüeh-niang, ends up in prison for misappropriation of funds.

Lai-pao's son. See Seng-pao.

Lai-pao's wife. See Hui-hsiang.

Lai-ting, page boy in the household of Hua Tzu-yu.

Lai-ting, page boy in the household of Huang the Fourth.

Lai-ting, page boy in the household of Wu K'ai.

Lai-wang, Cheng Wang, native of Hsü-chou, servant in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, husband of Sung Hui-lien, framed for attempted murder and driven out of the household in order to get him out of the way, carries on a clandestine affair with Sun Hsüeh-o before his exile and absconds with her when he returns to Ch'ing-ho after Hsi-men Ch'ing's death.

Lai-wang's first wife, dies of consumption.

Lai-wang's second wife. See Sung Hui-lien.

Lai-yu. See Lai-chüeh.

Lan-hsiang, senior maidservant of Meng Yü-lou.

Lan-hua, junior maidservant of P'ang Ch'un-mei after she becomes the wife of Chou Hsiu.

Lan-hua, elderly maidservant in the household of Wu K'ai.

Lan Ts'ung-hsi (fl. early 12th century), eunuch rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, uncle of Ho Yung-shou's wife, née Lan.

Lan Ts'ung-hsi's adopted son, granted the post of battalion vice commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father's part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Lan Ts'ung-hsi's niece. See Ho Yung-shou's wife, née Lan.

Lang, Buddhist Superior, monk of the Pao-en Temple in Ch'ing-ho.

Lei Ch'i-yüan, assistant commissioner of the Shantung Military Defense Circuit.

Li An, retainer in the household of Chou Hsiu who saves P'ang Ch'un-mei's life when she is threatened by Chang Sheng and resists her blandishments when she tries to seduce him.

Li An's father, deceased elder brother of Li Kuei.

Li An's mother, persuades Li An to avoid entanglement with P'ang Ch'un-mei by seeking refuge with his uncle Li Kuei in Ch'ing-chou.

Li, Barestick. See Li Kung-pi.

Li Ch'ang-ch'i, father of Li Kung-pi, district magistrate of Ch'ing-ho and later assistant prefect of Yen-chou in Chekiang.

Li Ch'ang-ch'i's wife, mother of Li Kung-pi.

Li Chiao-erh, Hsi-men Ch'ing's Second Lady, originally a singing girl from the Verdant Spring Bordello in Ch'ing-ho, aunt of Li Kuei-ch'ing and Li Kuei-chieh, enemy of P'an Chin-lien, tight-fisted manager of Hsi-men Ch'ing's household finances, engages in hanky-panky with Wu the Second, begins pilfering Hsi-men Ch'ing's property while his corpse is still warm, ends up as Chang Mao-te's Second Lady.

Li Chih, Li the Third, father of Li Huo, merchant contractor in Ch'ing-ho, partner of Huang the Fourth, ends up dying in prison for misappropriation of funds.

Li Chin, servant in the household of Li Chih.

Li Chung-yu, servant on the domestic staff of Ts'ai Ching.

Li, Eunuch Director. See Li Yen.

Li family of the Eastern Capital, family into which P'an Chin-lien is reincarnated as a daughter.

Li Huo, son of Li Chih.

Li Kang (1083–1140), minister of war under Emperor Ch'in-tsung who directs the defense against the Chin invaders.

Li Kuei, Shantung Yaksha, uncle of Li An, military instructor from Ch'ing-chou patronized by Li Kung-pi.

Li Kuei-chieh, Cassia, daughter of Auntie Li the Third, niece of Li Chiao-erh and Li Ming, younger sister of Li Kuei-ch'ing, singing girl from the Verdant Spring Bordello on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho, deflowered by Hsi-men Ch'ing, who maintains her as his mistress for twenty taels a month, adopted daughter of Wu Yüeh-niang, betrays Hsi-men Ch'ing with Ting the Second, Wang Ts'ai, and others.

Li Kuei-chieh's fifth maternal aunt.

Li Kuei-ch'ing, daughter of Auntie Li the Third, niece of Li Chiao-erh and Li Ming, elder sister of Li Kuei-chieh, singing girl from the Verdant Spring Bordello on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho.

Li K'uei, Black Whirlwind, bloodthirsty outlaw from Sung Chiang's band who massacres the household of Liang Shih-chieh and kills Yin T'ien-hsi.

Li Kung-pi, Bare Stick Li, only son of Li Ch'ang-ch'i, student at the Superior College of the National University, falls in love with Meng Yü-lou at first sight and arranges to marry her as his second wife, severely beaten by his father for his part in the abortive attempt to frame Ch'en Ching-chi, forced to return with his bride to his native place to resume his studies.

Li Kung-pi's deceased first wife.

Li Kung-pi's servant.

Li, Leaky. See Li Wai-ch'uan.

Li Ming, younger brother of Li Chiao-erh, uncle of Li Kuei-ch'ing and Li Kuei-chieh; actor and musician from the Verdant Spring Bordello on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho; employed by Hsi-men Ch'ing to teach Ch'un-mei, Yü-hsiao, Ying-ch'un, and Lan-hsiang to sing and play musical instruments; driven out of the house by Ch'un-mei for having the temerity to squeeze her hand during a lesson but allowed to return on many subsequent occasions; assists Li Chiao-erh, Li Kuei-ch'ing, and Li Kuei-chieh in despoiling Hsi-men Ch'ing's property after his death.

Li Pang-yen (d. 1130), minister of the right, grand academician of the Hall for Aid in Governance, and concurrently minister of rites, alters Hsi-men Ch'ing's name to Chia Lien on a bill of impeachment in return for a bribe of five hundred taels of silver, promoted to the ranks of pillar of state and grand preceptor of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, one of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch'en Tung.

Li P'ing-erh, Vase, Mrs. Hua, Mistress Hua, one of the three principal female protagonists of the novel, concubine of Liang Shih-chieh, wife of Hua Tzu-hsü, commits adultery with her husband's neighbor and sworn brother Hsi-men Ch'ing, wife of Dr. Chiang Chu-shan, Hsi-men Ch'ing's Sixth Lady, mother of Hsi-men Kuan-ko, dies of chronic hemorrhaging brought on by grief over the death of her son and Hsi-men Ch'ing's insistence on trying out his newly acquired aphrodisiac on her while she is in her menstrual period, commemorated in overly elaborate funeral observances that are prime examples of conspicuous consumption, haunts Hsi-men Ch'ing's dreams.

Li P'ing-erh's former incarnation. See Wang family of Pin-chou.

Li P'ing-erh's deceased parents.

Li P'ing-erh's reincarnation. See Yüan, Commander.

Li Ta-t'ien, district magistrate of Ch'ing-ho, relative of Chu Mien, appoints Wu Sung as police captain and later sends him to the Eastern Capital to stash his ill-gotten gains with his powerful relative, accepts Hsi-men Ch'ing's bribes to abuse the law in the cases of Wu Sung, Lai-wang, Sung Hui-lien, Miao T'ien-hsiu, and others.

Li the Third, seller of won-ton in front of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho.

Li the Third. See Li Chih.

Li the Third, Auntie, madam of the Verdant Spring Bordello on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho, mother of Li Kuei-ch'ing and Li Kuei-chieh, partially paralyzed, prototypical procuress who milks her customers for all she can get.

Li, Vice Minister, employer of Licentiate Shui.

Li Wai-ch'uan, Leaky Li, influence peddling lictor on the staff of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho who is mistakenly killed by Wu Sung in his abortive attempt to wreak vengeance on Hsi-men Ch'ing for the murder of his elder brother Wu Chih.

Li Yen (d. 1126), Eunuch Director Li, entertains Miao Ch'ing in his residence behind the Forbidden City in the Eastern Capital, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, one of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch'en Tung.

Li Yen's adopted son, granted the post of battalion vice commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father's part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Liang, Privy Councilor. See Liang Shih-chieh.

Liang Shih-chieh, Privy Councilor Liang, regent of the Northern Capital at Ta-ming prefecture in Hopei, son-in-law of Ts'ai Ching, first husband of Li P'ing-erh, forced to flee for his life when his entire household is slaughtered by Li K'uei.

Liang Shih-chieh's wife, née Ts'ai, daughter of Ts'ai Ching, extremely jealous woman who beats numbers of maidservants and concubines of her husband to death and buries them in the rear

flower garden, forced to flee for her life when her entire household is slaughtered by Li K'uei.

Liang To, professional boy actor in Ch'ing-ho.

Liang Ying-lung, commandant of security for the Eastern Capital.

Lin Ch'eng-hsün, judicial commissioner in the Huai-ch'ing office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission.

Lin Hsiao-hung, younger sister of Lin Ts'ai-hung, singing girl in Yang-chou patronized by Lai-pao.

Lin, Lady, widow of Imperial Commissioner Wang I-hsüan, mother of Wang Ts'ai, former mistress of P'an Chin-lien who learns to play musical instruments and to sing as a servant in her household, carries on an adulterous affair with Hsi-men Ch'ing under the transparent pretext of asking him to superintend the morals of her profligate son.

Lin Ling-su (d. c. 1125), Perfect Man Lin, Taoist priest who gains an ascendancy over Emperor Hui-tsung for a time and is showered with high-sounding titles, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Lin, Perfect Man. See Lin Ling-su.

Lin Shu (d. c. 1126), minister of works rewarded with the title grand guardian of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Lin Ts'ai-hung, elder sister of Lin Hsiao-hung, singing girl in Yang-chou.

Ling, Master, fortune teller in Ch'ing-ho who interprets Meng Yü-lou's horoscope when she is about to marry Li Kung-pi.

Ling Yün-i, prefect of Yen-chou in Shantung.

Little Iron Rod, son of Lai-chao and his wife Hui-ch'ing.

Little Jade. See Hsiao-yü.

Little Whirlwind. See Ch'ai Chin.

Liu, Assistant Regional Commander, officer of the Hsi-hsia army who gives a horse to Chai Ch'ien, who in turn presents it to Hsi-

men Ch’ing.

Liu Chao. See Lai-chao.

Liu Chü-chai, Dr., physician from Fen-chou in Shansi, friend of Ho Yung-shou who recommends him to Hsi-men Ch’ing when he is in extremis but whose treatment exacerbates his condition.

Liu, Company Commander, younger brother of Eunuch Director Liu, indicted for illicit use of imperial lumber in constructing a villa on a newly purchased estate at Wu-li Tien outside Ch’ing-ho, let off the hook by Hsi-men Ch’ing in response to a bribe proffered by Eunuch Director Liu.

Liu, Consort (1088–1121), Consort An, a favorite consort of Emperor Hui-tsung, mother of Chao I.

Liu, Dame, Stargazer Liu’s wife, medical practitioner and shamaness frequently called upon by the women of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household.

Liu, Eunuch Director, elder brother of Company Commander Liu, manager of the Imperial Brickyard in Ch’ing-ho, resides on an estate outside the south gate of the city, intervenes with Hsi-men Ch’ing to get his younger brother off the hook when indicted for misappropriation of imperial lumber but supplies Hsi-men Ch’ing with bricks from the Imperial Brickyard for construction of his country estate.

Liu, Eunuch Director, landlord of Dr. Hu’s house on East Street in Ch’ing-ho.

Liu, Eunuch Director, resides near Wine Vinegar Gate on the North Side of Ch’ing-ho, patron of Li Ming.

Liu Hui-hsiang. See Hui-hsiang.

Liu Kao, commander of An-p’ing Stockade, friend of Shih En who gives Wu Sung a hundred taels of silver and a letter of recommendation to him when he is sent there in military exile.

Liu, Mr., official serving in Huai-an who passed the *chin-shih* examinations the same year as Sung Ch’iao-nien.

Liu Pao, servant employed as a cook in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s silk dry goods store.

Liu, School Official, native of Hang-chou, educational official in Ch'ing-ho who borrows money from Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Liu the Second, Turf-protecting Tiger, brother-in-law of Chang Sheng, proprietor of My Own Tavern west of the bridge in Lin-ch'ing, pimp and racketeer, boss of unlicensed prostitution in Lin-ch'ing, beaten to death by Chou Hsiu at the behest of P'ang Ch'un-mei after Chang Sheng's murder of Ch'en Ching-chi.

Liu the Second, Little, seller of ready-cooked food in front of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho.

Liu Sheng, foreman on the domestic staff of Yang Chien.

Liu, Stargazer, husband of Dame Liu, blind fortune teller and necromancer who interprets P'an Chin-lien's horoscope, teaches her a method for working black magic on Hsi-men Ch'ing, and treats Hsi-men Kuan-ko ineffectually.

Liu the Third, servant of Company Commander Liu.

Liu Ts'ang, younger brother of Hui-hsiang, brother-in-law of Lai-pao with whom he cooperates in surreptitiously making off with eight hundred taels worth of Hsi-men Ch'ing's property after his death and using it to open a general store.

Liu Yen-ch'ing (1068–1127), commander-general of the Shensi region who leads the forces of Yen-sui against the Chin invaders.

Lo, Mohammedan, one of the "ball clubbers" patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Lo Ts'un-erh, singing girl of Ch'ing-ho patronized by Hsiang the Fifth.

Lo Wan-hsiang, prefect of Tung-p'ing.

Love. See Chu Ai-ai.

Lu Ch'ang-t'ui, Longleg Lu, madam of the brothel on Butterfly Lane in Ch'ing-ho where Chin-erh and Sai-erh work.

Lu Ch'ang-t'ui's husband.

Lu, Duke of. See Ts'ai Ching.

Lu Hu, clerical subofficial on the staff of Yang Chien.

Lu Hua, Snake-in-the-grass, "knockabout" who, along with Chang Sheng, shakes down Dr. Chiang Chu-shan at the behest of Hsi-men

Ch’ing.

Lu, Longleg. See Lu Ch’ang-t’ui.

Lu Ping-i, Lu the Second, crony of Ch’en Ching-chi who suggests how he can recover his property from Yang Kuang-yen and goes into partnership with him as the manager of the Hsieh Family Tavern in Lin-ch’ing.

Lu the Second. See Lu Ping-i.

Lung-hsi, Duke of. See Wang Wei.

Lü Sai-erh, singing girl in Ch’ing-ho.

Ma Chen, professional boy actor in Ch’ing-ho.

Ma, Mrs., next-door neighbor of Ying Po-chüeh.

Man-t’ang, maidservant in the household of Li Kung-pi.

Mao-te, Princess (fl. early 12th century), fifth daughter of Emperor Hui-tsung, married to Ts’ai Ching’s fourth son, Ts’ai T’iao.

Meng Ch’ang-ling (fl. early 12th century), eunuch rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Meng Ch’ang-ling’s adopted son, granted the post of battalion vice commander of the Embroidered Uniform Guard by *yin* privilege as a reward for his father’s part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Meng-ch’ang, Little Lord. See Ch’ai Chin.

Meng the Elder, elder brother of Meng Yü-lou.

Meng the Elder’s wife, Meng Yü-lou’s sister-in-law.

Meng Jui, Meng the Second, younger brother of Meng Yü-lou, a traveling merchant constantly on the road.

Meng Jui’s wife, Meng Yü-lou’s sister-in-law.

Meng the Second. See Meng Jui.

Meng the Third. See Meng Yü-lou.

Meng Yü-lou, Tower of Jade, Meng the Third, one of the female protagonists of the novel, widow of the textile merchant Yang Tsung-hsi, Hsi-men Ch’ing’s Third Lady, confidante of P’an Chin-lien, marries Li Kung-pi after the death of Hsi-men Ch’ing, forced

to return with her husband to his native place in Hopei after their abortive attempt to frame Ch'en Ching-chi, bears a son to Li Kung-pi at the age of forty and lives to the age of sixty-seven.

Meng Yü-lou's elder brother. See Meng the Elder.

Meng Yü-lou's elder sister. See Han Ming-ch'uan's wife, née Meng.

Meng Yü-lou's son by Li Kung-pi.

Meng Yü-lou's younger brother. See Meng Jui.

Miao Ch'ing, servant of Miao T'ien-hsiu who conspires with the boatmen Ch'en the Third and Weng the Eighth to murder his master on a trip to the Eastern Capital, bribes Hsi-men Ch'ing to get him off the hook, and returns to Yang-chou where he assumes his former master's position in society and maintains relations with his benefactor Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Miao-ch'ü, teenage disciple of Nun Hsüeh.

Miao-feng, teenage disciple of Nun Hsüeh.

Miao Hsiu, servant in the household of Miao Ch'ing.

Miao Shih, servant in the household of Miao Ch'ing.

Miao T'ien-hsiu, a wealthy merchant of Yang-chou who is murdered by his servant Miao Ch'ing on a trip to the Eastern Capital.

Miao T'ien-hsiu's concubine. See Tiao the Seventh.

Miao T'ien-hsiu's daughter.

Miao T'ien-hsiu's wife, née Li.

Ming-wu. See Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Mirror polisher, elderly itinerant artisan in Ch'ing-ho who polishes mirrors for P'an Chin-lien, Meng Yü-lou, and P'ang Ch'un-mei and elicits their sympathy with a sob story.

Mirror polisher's deceased first wife.

Mirror polisher's second wife.

Mirror polisher's son.

Monk, Indian, foreign monk presented as the personification of a penis whom Hsi-men Ch'ing encounters in the Temple of Eternal Felicity and from whom he obtains the aphrodisiac an overdose of which eventually kills him.

Moon Lady. See Wu Yüeh-niang.

Ni, Familiar. See Ni P’eng.

Ni, Licentiate. See Ni P’eng.

Ni P’eng, Familiar Ni, Licentiate Ni, tutor employed in the household of Hsia Yen-ling as a tutor for his son, Hsia Ch’eng-en, who recommends his fellow licentiate Wen Pi-ku to Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Nieh Liang-hu, schoolmate of Shang Hsiao-t’ang employed in his household as a tutor for his son who writes two congratulatory scrolls for Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Nieh, Tiptoe. See Nieh Yüeh.

Nieh Yüeh, Tiptoe Nieh, one of the “cribbers” in the licensed quarter of Ch’ing-ho who plays the tout to Wang Ts’ai on his visits to the licensed quarter and upon whom Hsi-men Ch’ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system at the behest of Lady Lin.

Nieh Yüeh’s wife.

Nien-erh, elder daughter of Lai-hsing by Hui-hsiu.

Nien-mo-ho. See Wan-yen Tsung-han.

Niu, Ms., singing girl in the Great Tavern on Lion Street who witnesses Wu Sung’s fatal assault on Li Wai-ch’uan.

Old woman who tells the fortunes of Wu Yüeh-niang, Meng Yü-lou, and Li P’ing-erh with the aid of a turtle.

Opportune Rain. See Sung Chiang.

Ostensibly Benign. See I Mien-tz’u.

Pai, Baldy. See Pai T’u-tzu.

Pai the Fifth, Moneybags Pai, father-in-law of Feng Huai, notorious local tyrant and fence for stolen goods in the area west of the Grand Canal.

Pai the Fourth, silversmith in Ch’ing-ho, acquaintance of Han Tao-kuo.

Pai Lai-ch’iang, Scrounger Pai, crony of Hsi-men Ch’ing, member of the brotherhood of ten.

Pai Lai-ch’iang’s wife.

Pai, Mohammendan. See Pai T’u-tzu.

Pai, Moneyboys. See Pai the Fifth.

Pai, Scrounger. See Pai Lai-ch'iang.

Pai Shih-chung (d. 1127), right vice minister of rites rewarded with the title grand guardian of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Pai T'u-tzu, Baldy Pai, Mohammedan Pai, "ball-clubber" in Ch'ing-ho who plays the tout to Wang Ts'ai on his visits to the licensed quarter and upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system at the behest of Lady Lin.

Pai Yü-lien, Jade Lotus, maidservant purchased by Mrs. Chang at the same time as P'an Chin-lien who dies shortly thereafter.

Palace foreman who plays the role of master of ceremonies at the imperial audience in the Hall for the Veneration of Governance.

Palefaced Gentleman. See Cheng T'ien-shou.

Pan-erh, unlicensed prostitute in Longfoot Wu's brothel in the Southern Entertainment Quarter of Ch'ing-ho patronized by P'ing-an after he absconds from the Hsi-men household with jewelry stolen from the pawnshop.

P'an Chi, one of the officials from the Ch'ing-ho Guard who comes to Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence to offer a sacrifice to the soul of Li P'ing-erh after her death.

P'an Chin-lien, Golden Lotus, P'an the Sixth, principal female protagonist of the novel, daughter of Tailor P'an from outside the South Gate of Ch'ing-ho who dies when she is only six years old; studies in a girls' school run by Licentiate Yü for three years where she learns to read and write; sold by her mother at the age of eight into the household of Imperial Commissioner Wang and Lady Lin where she is taught to play musical instruments and to sing; resold in her mid-teens, after the death of her master, into the household of Mr. Chang who deflowers her and then gives her as a bride to his tenant, Wu Sung's elder brother, the dwarf Wu Chih; paramour of Hsi-men Ch'ing who collaborates with her in poisoning her husband and subsequently makes her his Fifth Lady; seduces her husband's page boy Ch'in-t'ung for which he is driven out of the household; carries on a running affair with her

son-in-law, Ch'en Ching-chi, which is consummated after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing; responsible, directly or indirectly, for the suicide of Sung Hui-lien, the death of Hsi-men Kuan-ko, and the demise of Hsi-men Ch'ing; aborts her son by Ch'en Ching-chi; is sold out of the household by Wu Yüeh-niang, purchased by Wu Sung, and disemboweled by the latter in revenge for the death of his elder brother Wu Chih.

P'an Chin-lien's cat, Coal in the Snow, Snow Lion, Snow Bandit, long-haired white cat with a black streak on its forehead that P'an Chin-lien trains to attack Hsi-men Kuan-ko with fatal consequences.

P'an Chin-lien's father. See P'an, Tailor.

P'an Chin-lien's maternal aunt, younger sister of old Mrs. P'an.

P'an Chin-lien's maternal aunt's daughter, adopted by old Mrs. P'an to look after her in her old age.

P'an Chin-lien's mother. See P'an, old Mrs.

P'an Chin-lien's reincarnation. See Li Family of the Eastern Capital.

P'an, Demon-catcher. See P'an, Taoist Master.

P'an family prostitution ring operating out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch'ing, madam of.

P'an the fifth, white slaver, masquerading as a cotton merchant from Shantung, who operates a prostitution ring out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch'ing, buys Sun Hsüeh-o from Auntie Hsüeh, and forces her to become a singing girl.

P'an the Fifth's deceased first wife.

P'an the Fifth's mother.

P'an, old Mrs., widow of Tailor P'an, mother of P'an Chin-lien, sends her daughter to Licentiate Yü's girls' school for three years, sells her into the household of Imperial Commissioner Wang and Lady Lin at the age of eight, resells her in her mid-teens into the household of Mr. Chang, frequent visitor in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household where she is maltreated by P'an Chin-lien who is ashamed of her low social status, adopts her younger sister's daughter to look after her in her old age, dies not long after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

P’an the Sixth. See P’an Chin-lien.

P’an, Tailor, father of P’an Chin-lien, artisan from outside the South Gate of Ch’ing-ho who dies when P’an Chin-lien is only six years old.

P’an, Taoist Master, Demon-catcher P’an, Taoist exorcist from the Temple of the Five Peaks outside Ch’ing-ho who performs various rituals on Li P’ing-erh’s behalf but concludes that nothing can save her.

P’an, Taoist Master’s acolyte.

P’ang Ch’un-mei, Spring Plum Blossom, one of the three principal female protagonists of the novel, originally purchased by Hsi-men Ch’ing from Auntie Hsüeh for sixteen taels of silver as a maidservant for Wu Yüeh-niang, reassigned as senior maidservant to P’an Chin-lien when she enters the household, becomes her chief ally and confidante; from the time that her mistress allows her to share the sexual favors of Hsi-men Ch’ing she remains loyal to her right up to and even after her death; after the demise of Hsi-men Ch’ing she aids and abets P’an Chin-lien’s affair with Ch’en Ching-chi the discovery of which leads to her dismissal from the household; purchased as a concubine by Chou Hsiu, she bears him a son and is promoted to the status of principal wife, thereby rising higher in social status than any of the ladies she had formerly served as maidservant; comes to Wu Yüeh-niang’s assistance when she is threatened by Wu Tien-en and condescends to pay a visit to her former mistress and to witness at first hand the signs of her relative decline; carries on an intermittent affair with Ch’en Ching-chi under her husband’s nose and, after Chou Hsiu’s death, dies in the act of sexual intercourse with his servant Chou I.

P’ang Ch’un-mei’s deceased father who dies while she is still a child.

P’ang Ch’un-mei’s deceased mother who dies a year after her birth.

P’ang Ch’un-mei’s reincarnation. See K’ung family of the Eastern Capital.

P’ang ch’un-mei’s son. See Chou Chin-ko.

P’ang Hsüan, clerical subofficial on the staff of Yang Chien.

Pao, Dr., pediatric physician in Ch'ing-ho called in to treat Hsi-men Kuan-ko who declares the case to be hopeless.

Pao-en Temple in the Eastern Capital, monk from, tries unsuccessfully to warn Miao T'ien-hsiu against leaving home before his fatal trip to the Eastern Capital.

Pao, Ms., singing girl in the Great Tavern on Lion Street who witnesses Wu Sung's fatal assault on Li Wai-ch'uan.

Pen Chang-chieh, Jui-yün, daughter of Pen Ti-ch'uan and Yeh the Fifth, concubine of Hsia Yen-ling.

Pen the Fourth. See Pen Ti-ch'uan.

Pen, Scurry-about. See Pen Ti-ch'uan.

Pen Ti-ch'uan, Scurry-about Pen, Pen the Fourth, husband of Yeh the Fifth, father of Pen Chang-chieh, manager employed by Hsi-men Ch'ing in various capacities, member of the brotherhood of ten in which he replaces Hua Tzu-hsü after his death.

Pen Ti-ch'uan's daughter. See Pen Chang-chieh.

Pen Ti-ch'uan's wife. See Yeh the Fifth.

Pin-yang, Commandery Prince of. See Wang Ching-ch'ung.

P'ing-an, page boy in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, absconds with jewelry stolen from the pawnshop after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing, is caught, and allows himself to be coerced by the police chief Wu Tien-en into giving false testimony that Wu Yüeh-niang has been engaged in hanky-panky with Tai-an.

P'ing-erh. See Li P'ing-erh.

Prison guard on Chou Hsiu's staff.

Pu Chih-tao, No-account Pu, crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten whose place is taken after his death by Hua Tzu-hsü.

Pu, No-account. See Pu Chih-tao.

P'u-ching, Ch'an Master Snow Cave, mysterious Buddhist monk who provides Wu Yüeh-niang with a refuge in Snow Stream Cave on Mount T'ai when she is escaping attempted rape by Yin T'ien-hsi; at the end of the novel he conjures up a phantasmagoria in which all of the major protagonists describe themselves as being reborn

in approximately the same social strata they had occupied in their previous incarnations; convinces Wu Yüeh-niang that her son Hsiao-ko is a reincarnation of Hsi-men Ch'ing, and spirits him away into a life of Buddhist celibacy as his disciple.

Sai-erh, singing girl in Longleg Lu's brothel on Butterfly Lane in Ch'ing-ho.

Sauce and Scallions. See Chiang Ts'ung.

Second Lady. See Li Chiao-erh.

Seng-pao, son of Lai-pao and Hui-hsiang, betrothed to Wang Liu-erh's niece, the daughter of Butcher Wang and Sow Wang.

Servant from the household of Chou Hsiu who is sent to fetch P'ang Ch'un-mei with a lantern.

Servant in the inn at the foot of Mount T'ai where Wu Yüeh-niang and Wu K'ai spend the night on their pilgrimage.

Servant from the Verdant Spring Bordello who runs errands for Li Kuei-chieh.

Sha San, Yokel Sha, one of the "cribbers" and "ball clubbers" in Ch'ing-ho who plays the tout to Wang Ts'ai on his visits to the licensed quarter and upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system at the behest of Lady Lin.

Sha, Yokel. See Sha San.

Shamaness brought to the Hsi-men household by Dame Liu to burn paper money and perform a shamanistic dance on behalf of the sick Hsi-men Kuan-ko.

Shang Hsiao-t'ang, Provincial Graduate Shang, son of Shang Liu-t'ang, widower in Ch'ing-ho whom Chang Lung proposes unsuccessfully as a match for Meng Yü-lou, provincial graduate of the same year as Huang Pao-kuang, assisted by Hsi-men Ch'ing when he sets out for the Eastern Capital to compete in the *chin-shih* examinations.

Shang Hsiao-t'ang's second wife.

Shang Hsiao-t'ang's son.

Shang Liu-t'ang, Prefectural Judge Shang, father of Shang Hsiao-t'ang, formerly served as district magistrate of Huang Pao-kuang's

district and prefectural judge of Ch'eng-tu in Szechwan, resident of Main Street in Ch'ing-ho from whom both Li P'ing-erh's and Hsi-men Ch'ing's coffins are purchased.

Shang Liu-t'ang's deceased wife, mother of Shang Hsiao-t'ang.

Shang, Prefectural Judge. See Shang Liu-t'ang.

Shang, Provincial Graduate. See Shang Hsiao-t'ang.

Shantung Yaksha. See Li Kuei.

Shao Ch'ien, boy actor in Ch'ing-ho.

Shen, Brother-in-law, Mr. Shen, husband of Wu Yüeh-niang's elder sister.

Shen Ching, resident of the Eastern Capital, father of Shen Shou-shan.

Shen, Mr. See Shen, Brother-in-law.

Shen, Second Sister, blind professional singer in Ch'ing-ho recommended to Hsi-men Ch'ing by Wang Liu-erh but driven out of his household by P'ang Ch'un-mei when she refuses to sing for her.

Shen Shou-shan, second son of Shen Ching, reincarnation of Chou Hsiu.

Shen Ting, servant in the household of Brother-in-law Shen.

Shen T'ung, wealthy resident of the Eastern Capital, father of Shen Yüeh.

Shen Yüeh, second son of Shen T'ung, reincarnation of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Sheng-chin, ten-year-old country girl offered to P'ang Ch'un-mei as a maidservant but rejected for befouling her bed.

Sheng-chin's parents.

Shih Cho-kuei, Plastromancer Shih, shaman in Ch'ing-ho who prognosticates about the sick Hsi-men Kuan-ko through interpreting the cracks produced by applying heat to notches on the surface of the plastron of a tortoise shell.

Shih En, son of the warden of the prison camp at Meng-chou who befriends the exiled Wu Sung, obtains his assistance in his struggle with Chiang Men-shen for control of the Happy Forest

Tavern, and gives him a hundred taels of silver and a letter of recommendation to Liu Kao when he is transferred to the An-p'ing Stockade.

Shih, Plastromancer. See Shih Cho-kuei.

Shih Po-ts'ai, corrupt Taoist head priest of the Temple of the Goddess of Iridescent Clouds on the summit of Mount T'ai.

Short-legged Tiger. See Wang Ying.

Shu-t'ung, Little Chang Sung, native of Su-chou, page boy catamite and transvestite presented to Hsi-men Ch'ing by Li Ta-t'ien, placed in charge of Hsi-men Ch'ing's studio where he handles his correspondence and caters to his polymorphous sexual tastes, becomes intimate with Yü-hsiao and when discovered in flagrante delicto by P'an Chin-lien purloins enough of Hsi-men Ch'ing's property to make good his escape to his native place.

Shui, Licentiate, scholar of problematic morals unsuccessfully recommended to Hsi-men Ch'ing as a social secretary by Ying Po-chüeh; after Hsi-men Ch'ing's death he is engaged by the remaining members of the brotherhood of ten to compose a funeral eulogy for Hsi-men Ch'ing in which he compares him to the male genitalia.

Shui, Licentiate's father, friend of Ying Po-chüeh's father.

Shui, Licentiate's grandfather, friend of Ying Po-chüeh's grandfather.

Shui, Licentiate's two sons, die of smallpox.

Shui, Licentiate's wife, elopes to the Eastern Capital with her lover.

Sick beggar whom Ch'en Ching-chi keeps alive with the warmth of his body when he is working as a night watchman.

Silver. See Wu Yin-erh.

Singing boys, two boy singers sent under escort all the way to Hsi-men Ch'ing's home in Ch'ing-ho by his host, Miao Ch'ing, after he expresses admiration for their singing at a banquet in the residence of Li Yen in the Eastern Capital.

Six Traitors, Ts'ai Ching, T'ung Kuan, Li Pang-yen, Chu Mien, Kao Ch'iu, and Li Yen.

Sixth Lady. See Li P'ing-erh.

Snake-in-the-grass. See Lu Hua.

Snow Bandit. See P'an Chin-lien's cat.

Snow Cave, Ch'an Master. See P'u-ching.

Snow Lion. See P'an Chin-lien's cat.

Snow Moth. See Sun Hsüeh-o.

Southerner who deflowers Cheng Ai-yüeh.

Spring Plum Blossom. See P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Ssu Feng-i, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Stand-hard. See Tao-chien.

Star of Joy Bordello in Ch'ing-ho, cook from.

Storehouseman in charge of the local storehouse in Yen-chou Prefecture in Chekiang.

Street-skulking Rat. See Chang Sheng.

Sun, Blabbermouth. See Sun T'ien-hua.

Sun Chi, next door neighbor of Ch'en Ching-chi.

Sun Ch'ing, father-in-law of Huang the Fourth, father of Sun Wen-hsiang, employer of Feng the Second, merchant in Ch'ing-ho engaged in the cotton trade.

Sun Ch'ing's daughter. See Huang the Fourth's wife, née Sun.

Sun Ch'ing's son. See Sun Wen-hsiang.

Sun, Crooked-head, deceased husband of Aunt Yang.

Sun Erh-niang, concubine of Chou Hsiu, mother of Chou Yü-chieh.

Sun Erh-niang's maidservant.

Sun Erh-niang's maidservant's father.

Sun Hsüeh-o, Snow Moth, originally maidservant of Hsi-men Ch'ing's deceased first wife, née Ch'en, who enters his household as part of her dowry; Hsi-men Ch'ing's Fourth Lady but a second class citizen among his womenfolk whose responsibility is the kitchen; enemy of P'an Chin-lien and P'ang Ch'un-mei; carries on a clandestine affair with Lai-wang with whom she absconds when he returns to Ch'ing-ho after Hsi-men Ch'ing's death; apprehended by the authorities and sold into Chou Hsiu's household at the

behest of P’ang Ch’un-mei who abuses her, beats her, and sells her into prostitution in order to get her out of the way when she wishes to pass off Ch’en Ching-chi as her cousin; renamed as the singing girl, Yü-erh, working out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch’ing, she becomes the kept mistress of Chang Sheng until his death when she commits suicide.

Sun Hsüeh-o’s reincarnation. See Yao family from outside the Eastern Capital.

Sun Jung, commandant of justice for the two townships of the Eastern Capital.

Sun Kua-tsui. See Sun T’ien-hua.

Sun T’ien-hua, Sun Kua-tsui, Blabbermouth Sun, crony of Hsi-men Ch’ing, member of the brotherhood of ten, plays the tout to Wang Ts’ai on his visits to the licensed quarter.

Sun T’ien-hua’s wife.

Sun Wen-hsiang, son of Sun Ch’ing, brother-in-law of Huang the Fourth, involved in an affray with Feng Huai who dies of his injuries half a month later.

Sung Chiang (fl. 1117–21), Opportune Rain, chivalrous bandit chieftan, leader of a band of thirty-six outlaws in Liang-shan Marsh whose slogan is to “Carry out the Way on Heaven’s behalf,” slayer of Yen P’o-hsi, rescues Wu Yüeh-niang when she is captured by the bandits of Ch’ing-feng Stronghold and Wang Ying wants to make her his wife, eventually surrenders to Chang Shu-yeh and accepts the offer of a government amnesty.

Sung Ch’iao-nien (1047–1113), father-in-law of Ts’ai Yu, father of Sung Sheng-ch’ung, protégé of Ts’ai Ching, appointed regional investigating censor of Shantung to replace Tseng Hsiao-hsü, entertained by Hsi-men Ch’ing who presents him periodically with lavish bribes in return for which he gets Miao Ch’ing off the hook and does him numerous other illicit favors, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Sung Hui-lien, Chin-lien, daughter of Sung Jen, formerly maidservant in the household of Assistant Prefect Ts’ai who takes

sexual advantage of her; sacked for colluding with her mistress in a case of adultery; marries the cook Chiang Ts'ung who is stabbed to death in a brawl; second wife of Lai-wang; carries on a clandestine affair with Hsi-men Ch'ing that soon becomes public knowledge; after Lai-wang is framed for attempted murder and driven out of the household she suffers from remorse and commits suicide.

Sung Hui-lien's reincarnation. See Chu family of the Eastern Capital.

Sung Hui-lien's maternal aunt.

Sung Jen, father of Sung Hui-lien, coffin seller in Ch'ing-ho who accuses Hsi-men Ch'ing of driving his daughter to suicide but is given such a beating by the corrupt magistrate Li Ta-t'ien that he dies of his wounds.

Sung Sheng-ch'ung (fl. early 12th century), son of Sung Ch'iao-nien, elder brother of Ts'ai Yu's wife, née Sung, regional investigating censor of Shensi suborned into traducing Tseng Hsiao-hsü by Ts'ai Ching.

Sung Te, commits adultery with Ms. Chou, the widowed second wife of his father-in-law, for which Hsi-men Ch'ing sentences them both to death by strangulation.

Sung Te's father-in-law, deceased husband of Ms. Chou.

Sung Te's mother-in-law, deceased mother of Sung Te's wife.

Sung Te's wife.

Sung T'ui, eunuch rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Ta T'ien-tao, prefect of Tung-ch'ang.

Tai-an, Hsi-men An, favorite page boy of Hsi-men Ch'ing and his sedulous understudy in the arts of roguery and dissimulation; manages to stay on the right side of everyone with the exception of Wu Yüeh-niang who periodically berates him for his duplicity; married to Hsiao-yü after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing when Wu Yüeh-niang discovers them in flagrante delicto; remains with Wu Yüeh-niang and supports her in her old age in return for which he

is given the name Hsi-men An and inherits what is left of Hsi-men Ch'ing's property and social position.

T'ai-tsung, emperor of the Chin dynasty (r. 1123–35).

T'an Chen (fl. early 12th century), eunuch military commander with the concurrent rank of censor-in-chief, appointed to replace T'ung Kuan in command of the defense of the northern frontier against the Chin army.

T'ang Pao. See Lai-pao.

Tao-chien, Stand-hard, abbot of the Temple of Eternal Felicity at Wu-li Yüan outside the South Gate of Ch'ing-ho.

T'ao, Crud-crawler, an elderly resident of Ch'ing-ho who is renowned for having sexually molested all three of his daughters-in-law.

T'ao-hua, maidservant in the Star of Joy Bordello in Ch'ing-ho.

T'ao, Old Mother, licensed go-between in Ch'ing-ho who represents Li Kung-pi in his courtship of Meng Yü-lou.

Temple of the Jade Emperor outside the East Gate of Ch'ing-ho, lector of.

Teng, Midwife, called in by Ying Po-chüeh when his concubine, Ch'un-hua, bears him a son.

Third Lady. See Cho Tiu-erh and Meng Yü-lou.

Three-inch Mulberry-bark Manikin. See Wu Chih.

Ti Ssu-pin, Turbid Ti, vice-magistrate of Yang-ku district who locates the corpse of Miao T'ien-hsiu after his murder by Miao Ch'ing.

Ti, Turbid. See Ti Ssu-pin.

Tiao the Seventh, concubine of Miao T'ien-hsiu, formerly a singing girl from a brothel on the Yang-chou docks, carries on an affair with her husband's servant, Miao Ch'ing, the discovery of which leads to the beating of Miao Ch'ing and the murder of Miao T'ien-hsiu in revenge.

T'ien Chiu-kao, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

T’ien-fu. See Ch’in-t’ung.

T’ien-hsi, senior page boy in the household of Hua Tzu-hsü and Li P’ing-erh who absconds with five taels of silver when his master takes to his sickbed and vanishes without a trace.

T’ien Hu, bandit chieftan active in the Hopei area.

Ting, Director, Wu K’ai’s predecessor as director of the State Farm Battalion in Ch’ing-ho, cashiered for corruption by Hou Meng.

Ting, Mr., father of Ting the Second, silk merchant from Hang-chou.

Ting the Second, Ting Shuang-ch’iao, son of Mr. Ting, friend of Ch’en Liang-huai, a silk merchant from Hang-chou who patronizes Li Kuei-chieh while on a visit to Ch’ing-ho and hides under the bed when Hsi-men Ch’ing discovers their liaison and smashes up the Verdant Spring Bordello.

Ting Shuang-ch’iao. See Ting the Second.

Ting the Southerner, wine merchant in Ch’ing-ho from whom Hsi-men Ch’ing buys forty jugs of Ho-ch’ing wine on credit.

Tou Chien (d. 1127), superintendant of the Capital Training Divisions and capital security commissioner.

Tower of Jade. See Meng Yü-lou.

Ts’ai, Assistant Prefect, resident of Ch’ing-ho from whose household Sung Hui-lien is expelled for colluding with her mistress in a case of adultery.

Ts’ai, Assistant Prefect’s wife.

Ts’ai Ching (1046–1126), father of Ts’ai Yu, Ts’ai T’iao, Ts’ai T’ao, and Ts’ai Hsiu, father-in-law of Liang Shih-chieh, left grand councilor, grand academician of the Hall for Veneration of Governance, grand preceptor, minister of personnel, Duke of Lu, most powerful minister at the court of Emperor Hui-tsung, impeached by Yü-wen Hsü-chung, patron and adoptive father of Ts’ai Yün and Hsi-men Ch’ing, first of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch’en Tung.

Ts’ai Ching’s mansion in the Eastern Capital, gatekeepers of.

Ts’ai Ching’s mansion in the Eastern Capital, page boy in.

Ts’ai Ching’s wife.

Ts’ai family of Yen-chou in Shantung, family of which Hsi-men Hsiao-ko is alleged to have been a son in his previous incarnation.

Ts’ai Hsing (fl. early 12th century), son of Ts’ai Yu, appointed director of the Palace Administration as a reward for his father’s part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Ts’ai Hsiu, ninth son of Ts’ai Ching, prefect of Chiu-chiang.

Ts’ai, Midwife, presides over the deliveries of Li P’ing-erh’s son, Hsi-men Kuan-ko, and Wu Yüeh-niang’s son, Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Ts’ai T’ao (d. after 1147), fifth son of Ts’ai Ching.

Ts’ai Tiao (d. after 1137), fourth son of Ts’ai Ching, consort of Princess Mao-te.

Ts’ai Yu (1077–1126), eldest son of Ts’ai Ching, son-in-law of Sung Ch’iao-nien, brother-in-law of Sung Sheng-ch’ung, father of Ts’ai Hsing, academician of the Hall of Auspicious Harmony, minister of rites, superintendent of the Temple of Supreme Unity, rewarded with the title grand guardian of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park, executed by order of Emperor Ch’in-tsung after the fall of Ts’ai Ching and his faction.

Ts’ai Yu’s son. See Ts’ai Hsing.

Ts’ai Yu’s wife, née Sung, daughter of Sung Ch’iao-nien, younger sister of Sung Sheng-ch’ung.

Ts’ai Yün, awarded first place in the *chin-shih* examinations in place of An Ch’en when the latter is displaced for being the younger brother of the proscribed An Tun, becomes a protégé and adopted son of Ts’ai Ching, appointed proofreader in the Palace Library, is patronized by Hsi-men Ch’ing; after being impeached by Ts’ao Ho he is appointed salt-control censor of the Liang-Huai region where his illicit favors to Hsi-men Ch’ing abet his profitable speculations in the salt trade.

Ts’ai Yün’s mother.

Tsang Pu-hsi, docket officer on the staff of the district yamen in Ch’ing-ho.

Ts’ao Ho, censor who impeaches Ts’ai Yün and thirteen others from the Historiography Institute who had passed the *chin-shih* examinations in the same year.

Tseng Hsiao-hsü (1049–1127), son of Tseng Pu, regional investigating censor of Shantung, reopens the case of Miao T’ien-hsiu’s murder at the request of Huang Mei and arrives at the truth only to have his memorial suppressed when Hsi-men Ch’ing and Hsia Yen-ling bribe Ts’ai Ching to intervene; submits a memorial to the throne criticizing the policies of Ts’ai Ching that so enrages the prime minister that he suborns his daughter-in-law’s brother, Sung Sheng-ch’ung, into framing him on trumped up charges as a result of which he is deprived of his office and banished to the farthest southern extremity of the country.

Tseng Pu (1036–1107), father of Tseng Hsiao-hsü.

Tso Shun, professional boy actor in Ch’ing-ho.

Ts’ui-erh, maidservant of Sun Hsüeh-o.

Ts’ui-hua, junior maidservant of P’ang Ch’un-mei after she becomes the wife of Chou Hsiu.

Ts’ui Pen, nephew of Ch’iao Hung, husband of Big Sister Tuan, employee, manager, and partner in several of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s enterprises.

Ts’ui Pen’s mother, Ch’iao Hung’s elder sister.

Ts’ui, Privy Councilor. See Ts’ui Shou-yü.

Ts’ui Shou-yü, Privy Councilor Ts’ui, relative of Hsia Yen-ling with whom he stays on his visit to the Eastern Capital.

Tsung-mei. See Ch’en Ching-chi.

Tsung-ming. See Chin Tsung-ming.

Tsung Tse (1059–1128), general-in-chief of the Southern Sung armies who retakes parts of Shantung and Hopei from the Chin invaders on behalf of Emperor Kao-tsung.

Tu the Third, maternal cousin of Ying Po-chüeh.

Tu the Third’s page boy.

Tu the Third’s wife.

Tu Tzu-ch'un, privy councilor under a previous reign living in retirement in the northern quarter of Ch'ing-ho, engaged by Hsi-men Ch'ing to indite the inscription on Li P'ing-erh's funeral banderole.

Tuan, Big Sister, wife of Ts'ui Pen.

Tuan, Big Sister's father.

Tuan, Consort. See Feng, Consort.

Tuan, Half-baked. See Tuan Mien.

Tuan Mien, Half-baked Tuan, one of the "cribbers" in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Tuan, Old Mother, waiting woman in Lady Lin's household whose residence in the rear of the compound is used as a rendezvous by her lovers.

Tung the Cat. See Tung Chin-erh.

Tung Chiao-erh, singing girl from the Tung Family Brothel on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho who spends the night with Ts'ai Yün at Hsi-men Ch'ing's behest.

Tung Chin-erh, Tung the Cat, singing girl from the Tung Family Brothel on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho, patronized by Chang Mao-te.

Tung Sheng, clerical subofficial on the staff of Wang Fu.

Tung Yü-hsien, singing girl from the Tung Family Brothel on Second Street in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho.

T'ung Kuan (1054–1126), eunuch military officer beaten up by Wu Sung in a drunken brawl, uncle of T'ung T'ien-yin, military affairs commissioner, defender-in-chief of the Palace Command, Commandery Prince of Kuang-yang, one of the Six Traitors impeached by Ch'en Tung.

T'ung Kuan's nephew. See T'ung T'ien-yin.

T'ung, Prefectural Judge, prefectural judge of Tung-p'ing who conducts the preliminary hearing in the case of the affray between Feng Huai and Sun Wen-hsiang.

T'ung T'ien-yin, nephew of T'ung Kuan, commander of the guard, director of the Office of Herds in the Inner and Outer Imperial

Demesnes of the Court of the Imperial Stud.

Turf-protecting Tiger. See Liu the Second.

Tutor employed in the household of Miao Ch'ing.

Tz'u-hui Temple, abbot of, recovers the corpse of the murdered Miao T'ien-hsiu and buries it on the bank of the river west of Ch'ing-ho where it is discovered by Ti Ssu-pin.

Vase. See Li P'ing-erh.

Waiter in My Own Tavern in Lin-ch'ing.

Wan-yen Tsung-han (1079–1136), Nien-mo-ho, nephew of Emperor T'ai-tsu (r. 1115–23) the founder of the Chin dynasty, commander of the Chin army that occupies K'ai-feng and takes Retired Emperor Hui-tsung and Emperor Ch'in-tsung into captivity.

Wan-yen Tsung-wang (d. 1127), Wo-li-pu, second son of Emperor T'ai-tsu (r. 1115–23) the founder of the Chin dynasty, associate commander of the Chin army that occupies K'ai-feng and takes Retired Emperor Hui-tsung and Emperor Ch'in-tsung into captivity, kills Chou Hsiu with an arrow through the throat.

Wang, Attendant, official on the staff of the Prince of Yün to whom Han Tao-kuo appeals through Hsi-men Ch'ing and Jen Hou-ch'i to be allowed to commute his hereditary corvée labor obligation to payments in money or goods.

Wang, Butcher, elder brother of Wang Liu-erh, husband of Sow Wang whose daughter is betrothed to Seng-pao.

Wang Ch'ao, son of Dame Wang, apprenticed to a merchant from the Huai River region from whom he steals a hundred taels entrusted to him for the purchase of stock, returns to Ch'ing-ho, and uses it as capital to buy two donkeys and set up a flour mill, becomes a casual lover of P'an Chin-lien while she is in Dame Wang's house awaiting purchase as a concubine.

Wang Chen, second son of Wang Hsüan, government student in the prefectural school.

Wang Ch'ien, eldest son of Wang Hsüan, hereditary battalion commander of the local Horse Pasturage Battalion of the Court of the Imperial Stud.

Wang Chin-ch'ing. See Wang Shen.

Wang Ching, younger brother of Wang Liu-erh, page boy employed in the household of Hsi-men Ch'ing as a replacement for Shu-t'ung after he absconds, sodomized by Hsi-men Ch'ing during his visit to the Eastern Capital, expelled from the household by Wu Yüeh-niang after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Wang Ching-ch'ung (d. 949), military commissioner of T'ai-yüan, Commandery Prince of Pin-yang, ancestor of Wang I-hsüan.

Wang Ch'ing, bandit chieftan active in the Huai-hsi area.

Wang Chu, elder brother of Wang Hsiang, professional boy actor in Ch'ing-ho.

Wang, Consort (d. 1117), a consort of Emperor Hui-tsung, mother of Chao K'ai, the Prince of Yün, related to Wang the Second.

Wang, Dame, mother of Wang Ch'ao, proprietress of a teahouse next door to Wu Chih's house on Amythest Street on the west side of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho who is also active as a go-between and procuress; go-between who proposes the match between Hsi-men Ch'ing and Wu Yüeh-niang; inventor of the elaborate scheme by which Hsi-men Ch'ing seduces P'an Chin-lien; suggests the poisoning of her next door neighbor Wu Chih and helps P'an Chin-lien carry it out; intervenes on behalf of Ho the Tenth when he is accused of fencing stolen goods with the result that Hsi-men Ch'ing gets him off the hook and executes an innocent monk in his stead; after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing, when Wu Yüeh-niang discovers P'an Chin-lien's affair with Ch'en Ching-chi, she expells her from the household and consigns her to Dame Wang, who entertains bids from Magnate Ho, Chang Mao-te, Ch'en Ching-chi, and Chou Hsiu before finally selling her to Wu Sung for a hundred taels of silver plus a five tael brokerage fee; that same night she is decapitated by Wu Sung after he has disemboweled P'an Chin-lien.

Wang, Dame's deceased husband, father of Wang Ch'ao, dies when she is thirty-five.

Wang, Dame's son. See Wang Ch'ao.

Wang, distaff relative of the imperial family. See Wang the Second.

Wang family of Cheng-chou, family into which Hsi-men Kuan-ko is reincarnated as a son.

Wang family of the Eastern Capital, family into which Ch'en Ching-chi is reincarnated as a son.

Wang family of Pin-chou, family in which Li P'ing-erh is alleged to have been formerly incarnated as a son.

Wang the First, Auntie, madam of the Wang Family Brothel in Yang-chou.

Wang Fu (1079–1126), minister of war impeached by Yü-wen Hsü-chung.

Wang Fu's wife and children.

Wang Hai-feng. See Wang Ssu-feng.

Wang Han, servant in the household of Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh.

Wang Hsiang, younger brother of Wang Chu, professional boy actor in Ch'ing-ho.

Wang Hsien, employee of Hsi-men Ch'ing who accompanies Lai-pao on a buying trip to Nan-ching.

Wang Hsüan, Layman of Apricot Hermitage, father of Wang Ch'ien and Wang Chen, friend of Ch'en Hung, retired philanthropist who provides aid to Ch'en Ching-chi three times after he is reduced to beggary and who recommends him to Abbot Jen of the Yen-kung Temple in Lin-ch'ing.

Wang Hsüan's manager, in charge of a pawnshop on the street front of his residence.

Wang Huan (fl. early 12th century), commander-general of the Hopei region who leads the forces of Wei-po against the Chin invaders.

Wang I-hsüan, Imperial Commissioner Wang, descendant of Wang Ching-ch'ung, deceased husband of Lady Lin, father of Wang Ts'ai.

Wang I-hsüan's wife. See Lady Lin.

Wang I-hsüan's son. See Wang Ts'ai.

Wang, Imperial Commissioner. See Wang I-hsüan.

Wang K’uan, head of the mutual security unit for Ch’en Ching-chi’s residence in Ch’ing-ho.

Wang Lien, henchman on the domestic staff of Wang Fu.

Wang Liu-erh, Wang the Sixth, one of the female protagonists of the novel, younger sister of Butcher Wang, elder sister of Wang Ching, wife of Han Tao-kuo, mother of Han Ai-chieh; paramour of her brother-in-law, Han the Second, whom she marries after her husband’s death, of Hsi-men Ch’ing, to whose death from sexual exhaustion she is a major contributor, and of Magnate Ho, whose property in Hu-chou she inherits.

Wang Liu-erh’s niece, daughter of Butcher Wang and Sow Wang, betrothed to Seng-pao, the son of Lai-pao and Hui-hsiang.

Wang Luan, proprietor of the Great Tavern on Lion Street in Ch’ing-ho who witnesses Wu Sung’s fatal attack on Li Wai-ch’uan.

Wang, Nun, Buddhist nun from the Kuan-yin Nunnery in Ch’ing-ho which is patronized by Wu Yüeh-niang, frequently invited to recite Buddhist “precious scrolls” to Wu Yüeh-niang and her guests, recommends Nun Hsüeh to Wu Yüeh-niang who takes her fertility potion and conceives Hsi-men Hsiao-ko, later quarrels with Nun Hsüeh over the division of alms from Li P’ing-erh and Wu Yüeh-niang.

Wang, Old Mrs., neighbor of Yün Li-shou in Chi-nan who appears in Wu Yüeh-niang’s nightmare.

Wang, Old Sister, singing girl working out of My Own Tavern in Lin-ch’ing.

Wang Ping (d. 1126), commander-general of the Kuan-tung region who leads the forces of Fen-chiang against the Chin invaders.

Wang Po-ju, proprietor of an inn on the docks in Yang-chou recommended to Han Tao-kuo, Lai-pao, and Ts’ui Pen by Hsi-men Ch’ing as a good place to stay.

Wang Po-ju’s father, friend of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s father, Hsi-men Ta.

Wang Po-yen (1069–1141), right assistant administration commissioner of Shantung.

Wang the Second, distaff relative of the imperial family through Consort Wang, landlord of Wu Chih’s residence on the west side

of Amythest Street in Ch'ing-ho, purchaser of Eunuch Director Hua's mansion on Main Street in An-ch'ing ward of Ch'ing-ho, maintains a private troupe of twenty actors that he sometimes lends to Hsi-men Ch'ing to entertain his guests.

Wang Shen (c. 1048-c. 1103), Wang Chin-ch'ing, commandant-escort and director of the Court of the Imperial Clan, consort of the second daughter of Emperor Ying-tsung (r. 1063–67).

Wang Shih-ch'i, prefect of Ch'ing-chou in Shantung.

Wang the Sixth. See Wang Liu-erh.

Wang, Sow, wife of Butcher Wang whose daughter is betrothed to Seng-pao.

Wang Ssu-feng, Wang Hai-feng, salt merchant from Yang-chou who is set free from prison in Ts'ang-chou by Hou Meng, the grand coordinator of Shantung, as a result of Hsi-men Ch'ing's intervention with Ts'ai Ching.

Wang the Third. See Wang Ts'ai.

Wang Ts'ai (1078–1118), Wang the Third, feckless and dissolute third son of Wang I-hsüan and Lady Lin, married to the niece of Huang Ching-ch'en, tries unsuccessfully to borrow three hundred taels of silver from Hsü Pu-yü in order to purchase a position in the Military School, pawns his wife's possessions in order to pursue various singing girls in the licensed quarter including those patronized by Hsi-men Ch'ing, tricked into becoming the adopted son of Hsi-men Ch'ing during his intrigue with Lady Lin, continues his affair with Li Kuei-chieh after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Wang Ts'ai's wife, née Huang, niece of Huang Ching-ch'en.

Wang Tsu-tao (d. 1108), minister of personnel.

Wang Tung-ch'iao, traveling merchant entertained by Han Tao-kuo in Yang-chou.

Wang, Usher, official in the Court of State Ceremonial who offers the sixteen-year-old wife of his runaway retainer for sale as a maidservant through Old Mother Feng.

Wang, Usher's runaway retainer.

Wang, Usher's runaway retainer's wife.

Wang Wei, supreme commander of the Capital Training Divisions, Duke of Lung-hsi, granted the title of grand mentor for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Wang Ying, Short-legged Tiger, second outlaw leader of the Ch'ing-feng Stronghold on Ch'ing-feng Mountain who wants to make Wu Yüeh-niang his wife when she is captured by his band but is prevented from doing so by Sung Chiang.

Wang Yu, commander of a training division rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Wang Yü, subofficial functionary on the domestic staff of Ts'ai Ching deputed by Chai Ch'ien to carry a message of condolence to Hsi-men Ch'ing and a personal letter from Han Ai-chieh to Han Tao-kuo and Wang Liu-erh.

Wang Yü-chih, singing girl from the Wang Family Brothel in Yang-chou patronized by Han Tao-kuo.

Wei Ch'eng-hsün, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Wei Ts'ung-erh, a taciturn chair-bearer in Ch'ing-ho, partner of Chang Ch'uan-erh.

Wen, Auntie, mother of Wen T'ang, go-between in Ch'ing-ho who represents Ch'en Ching-chi's family at the time of his betrothal to Hsi-men Ta-chieh, resident of Wang Family Alley on the South Side of town, active in promoting pilgrimages to Mount T'ai, patronized by Lady Lin for whom she acts as a procuress in her adulterous affairs including that with Hsi-men Ch'ing, involved with Auntie Hsüeh in arranging the betrothal between Chang Mao-te's son and Eunuch Director Hsü's niece.

Wen Ch'en, one of the officials from the Ch'ing-ho Guard who comes to Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence to offer a sacrifice to the soul of Li P'ing-erh after her death.

Wen Hsi, military director-in-chief of Yen-chou in Shantung.

Wen, Licentiate. See Wen Pi-ku.

Wen, Pedant. See Wen Pi-ku.

Wen Pi-ku, Warm-buttocks Wen, Pedant Wen, Licentiate Wen, pederast recommended to Hsi-men Ch'ing by his fellow licentiate Ni P'eng to be his social secretary, housed across the street from Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence in the property formerly belonging to Ch'iao Hung, divulges Hsi-men Ch'ing's private correspondence to Ni P'eng who shares it with Hsia Yen-ling, sodomizes Hua-t'ung against his will and is expelled from the Hsi-men household when his indiscretions are exposed.

Wen Pi-ku's mother-in-law.

Wen Pi-ku's wife.

Wen T'ang, son of Auntie Wen.

Wen T'ang's wife.

Wen, Warm-buttocks. See Wen Pi-ku.

Weng the Eighth, criminal boatman who, along with his partner Ch'en the Third, murders Miao T'ien-hsiu.

What a Whopper. See Hsieh Ju-huang.

Wo-li-pu. See Wan-yen Tsung-wang.

Wu, Abbot. See Wu Tsung-che.

Wu, Battalion Commander, father of Wu K'ai, Wu the Second, Wu Yüeh-niang's elder sister, and Wu Yüeh-niang, hereditary battalion commander of the Ch'ing-ho Left Guard.

Wu, Captain. See Wu Sung.

Wu Ch'ang-chiao, Longfoot Wu, madam of the brothel in the Southern Entertainment Quarter of Ch'ing-ho patronized by P'ing-an after he absconds from the Hsi-men household with jewelry stolen from the pawnshop.

Wu Ch'ang-chiao's husband.

Wu Chih, Wu the Elder, Three-inch Mulberry-bark Manikin, elder brother of Wu Sung, father of Ying-erh by his deceased first wife, husband of P'an Chin-lien, simple-minded dwarf, native of Yang-ku district in Shantung who moves to the district town of Ch'ing-ho because of a famine and makes his living by peddling steamed

wheat cakes on the street, cuckolded by P'an Chin-lien with his landlord, Mr. Chang, and then with Hsi-men Ch'ing, catches P'an Chin-lien and Hsi-men Ch'ing in flagrante delicto in Dame Wang's teahouse but suffers a near-fatal injury when Hsi-men Ch'ing kicks him in the solar plexus, poisoned by P'an Chin-lien with arsenic supplied by Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Wu Chih's daughter. See Ying-erh.

Wu Chih's deceased first wife, mother of Ying-erh.

Wu Chih's second wife. See P'an Chin-lien.

Wu the Elder. See Wu Chih.

Wu the Fourth, Auntie, madam of the Wu Family Bordello on the back alley in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho.

Wu, Heartless. See Wu Tien-en.

Wu Hsün, secretary of the Bureau of Irrigation and Transportation in the Ministry of Works, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Wu Hui, younger brother of Wu Yin-erh, actor and musician from the Wu Family Bordello on the back alley in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho.

Wu, Immortal. See Wu Shih.

Wu K'ai, eldest son of Battalion Commander Wu, elder brother of Wu the Second, Wu Yüeh-niang's elder sister, and Wu Yüeh-niang, father of Wu Shun-ch'en, brother-in-law of Hsi-men Ch'ing, inherits the position of battalion commander of the Ch'ing-ho Left Guard upon the death of his father, deputed to repair the local Charity Granary, promoted to the rank of assistant commander of the Ch'ing-ho Guard in charge of the local State Farm Battalion as a result of Hsi-men Ch'ing's influence with Sung Ch'iao-nien, accompanies Wu Yüeh-niang on her pilgrimage to Mount T'ai after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing and is instrumental in rescuing her from attempted rape by Yin T'ien-hsi.

Wu K'ai's son. See Wu Shun-ch'en.

Wu K'ai's wife, Sister-in-law Wu, mother of Wu Shun-ch'en, sister-in-law of Hsi-men Ch'ing and a frequent guest in his household.

Wu, Longfoot. See Wu Ch'ang-chiao.

Wu the Second, second son of Battalion Commander Wu, younger brother of Wu K'ai, second elder brother of Wu Yüeh-niang, brother-in-law of Hsi-men Ch'ing and manager of his silk store on Lion Street; engages in hanky-panky with Li Chiao-erh for which he is denied access to the household by Wu Yüeh-niang when it is discovered after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing although he continues to manage the silk store and later, along with Tai-an, the wholesale pharmaceutical business; accompanies Wu Yüeh-niang, Tai-an, Hsiao-yü, and Hsi-men Hsiao-ko when they flee the invading Chin armies to seek refuge with Yün Li-shou in Chi-nan; ten days after the climactic encounter with P'u-ching in the Temple of Eternal Felicity and Wu Yüeh-niang's relinquishment of Hsi-men Hsiao-ko to a life of Buddhist celibacy he accompanies Wu Yüeh-niang, Tai-an, and Hsiao-yü back to their now truncated household in Ch'ing-ho.

Wu the Second. See Wu Sung.

Wu the Second's wife, wife of Wu Yüeh-niang's second elder brother.

Wu Shih, Immortal Wu, Taoist physiognomist introduced to Hsi-men Ch'ing by Chou Hsiu who accurately foretells his fortune and those of his wife and concubines as well as Hsi-men Ta-chieh and P'ang Ch'un-mei; when Hsi-men Ch'ing is on his deathbed he is called in again and reports that there is no hope for him.

Wu Shih's servant boy.

Wu Shun-ch'en, son of Wu K'ai, husband of Third Sister Cheng.

Wu, Sister-in-law. See Wu K'ai's wife.

Wu Sung, Wu the Second, Captain Wu, younger brother of Wu Chih, brother-in-law of P'an Chin-lien; impulsive and implacable exponent of the code of honor; becomes a fugitive from the law for beating up T'ung Kuan in a drunken brawl; slays a tiger in single-handed combat while on his way to visit his brother and is made police captain in Ch'ing-ho for this feat; rejects attempted seduction by P'an Chin-lien and tells her off in no uncertain terms; delivers Li Ta-t'ien's illicit gains from his magistracy to the

safe keeping of Chu Mien in the Eastern Capital; returns to Ch'ing-ho and mistakenly kills Li Wai-ch'uan while seeking to avenge the murder of his brother; is sentenced to military exile in Meng-chou where he is befriended by Shih En and helps him in his struggle with Chiang Men-shen for control of the Happy Forest Tavern; is framed by Military Director-in-chief Chang with the help of his concubine, Chiang Yü-lan, the younger sister of Chiang Men-shen, in revenge for which he murders his two guards and the entire households of Military Director-in-chief Chang and Chiang Men-shen; sets out for An-p'ing Stockade with a hundred taels of silver and a letter of recommendation from Shih En but is enabled by a general amnesty to return to Ch'ing-ho where he buys P'an Chin-lien from Dame Wang for a hundred taels of silver and disembowels her to avenge the death of his brother; once more a fugitive he disguises himself as a Buddhist ascetic with the help of the criminal innkeepers Chang Ch'ing and his wife and goes to join Sung Chiang's band of outlaws in Liang-shan Marsh.

Wu-t'ai, Mount, monk from, who solicits alms from Wu Yüeh-niang for the repair of his temple.

Wu Tien-en, Heartless Wu, originally a Yin-yang master on the staff of the district yamen in Ch'ing-ho who has been removed from his post for cause; makes his living by hanging around in front of the yamen and acting as a guarantor for loans to local officials and functionaries; crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing; member of the brotherhood of ten; manager employed by Hsi-men Ch'ing in various of his enterprises; misrepresents himself as Hsi-men Ch'ing's brother-in-law and is appointed to the post of station master of the Ch'ing-ho Postal Relay Station in return for his part in delivering birthday presents from Hsi-men Ch'ing to Ts'ai Ching; receives an interest-free loan of one hundred taels from Hsi-men Ch'ing to help cover the expenses of assuming office; promoted to the position of police chief of a suburb of Ch'ing-ho after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing he apprehends the runaway P'ing-an and coerces him into giving false testimony that Wu Yüeh-niang has been engaged in hanky-panky with Tai-an, but

when Wu Yüeh-niang appeals to P'ang Ch'un-mei he is dragged before Chou Hsiu's higher court and thoroughly humiliated.

Wu Tsung-che, Abbot Wu, head priest of the Taoist Temple of the Jade Emperor outside the East Gate of Ch'ing-ho, presides over the elaborate Taoist ceremony at which Hsi-men Kuan-ko is made an infant Taoist priest with the religious name Wu Ying-yüan, later officiates at funeral observances for Li P'ing-erh and Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Wu Yin-erh, Silver, elder sister of Wu Hui, singing girl from the Wu Family Bordello on the back alley of the licensed quarter in Ch'ing-ho, sweetheart of Hua Tzu-hsü, adopted daughter of Li P'ing-erh.

Wu Ying-yüan. See Hsi-men Kuan-ko.

Wu Yüeh-niang, Moon Lady, one of the female protagonists of the novel, daughter of Battalion Commander Wu, younger sister of Wu K'ai, Wu the Second, and an elder sister; second wife and First Lady of Hsi-men Ch'ing who marries her after the death of his first wife, née Ch'en, in a match proposed by Dame Wang; stepmother of Hsi-men Ta-chieh, mother of Hsi-men Hsiao-ko; a pious, credulous, and conventional Buddhist laywoman who constantly invites Nun Wang and Nun Hsüeh to the household to recite "precious scrolls" on the themes of salvation, retribution, and reincarnation, who has good intentions but is generally ineffectual at household management and is not a good judge of character; colludes with Hsi-men Ch'ing in taking secret possession of Li P'ing-erh's ill-gotten property but quarrels with him over admitting her to the household; suffers a miscarriage but later takes Nun Hsüeh's fertility potion and conceives Hsi-men Hsiao-ko who is born at the very moment of Hsi-men Ch'ing's death; thoughtlessly betroths both Kuan-ko and Hsiao-ko to inappropriate partners while they are still babes in arms; makes a pilgrimage to Mount T'ai after Hsi-men Ch'ing's death and narrowly escapes an attempted rape by Yin T'ien-hsi and capture by the bandits on Ch'ing-feng Mountain; expels P'an Chin-lien, P'ang Ch'un-mei, and Ch'en Ching-chi from the household when

she belatedly discovers their perfidy but is unable to cope effectively with the declining fortunes of the family; forced to seek the assistance of P'ang Ch'un-mei when she is threatened by Wu Tien-en she has no alternative but to accept the condescension of her former maidservant; while fleeing from the invading Chin armies to seek refuge with Yün Li-shou in Chi-nan she encounters P'u-ching and spends the night in the Temple of Eternal Felicity where she dreams that Yün Li-shou threatens her with rape if she refuses to marry him; still traumatized by this nightmare, she allows P'u-ching to persuade her that Hsiao-ko is the reincarnation of Hsi-men Ch'ing and relinquishes her teenage son to a life of Buddhist celibacy without so much as asking his opinion; on returning safely to Ch'ing-ho she adopts Tai-an as her husband's heir, renaming him Hsi-men An, and lives in reduced circumstances, presiding over a truncated household, until dying a natural death at the age of sixty-nine.

Wu Yüeh-niang's elder sister, wife of Brother-in-law Shen.

Yang, Aunt, widow of Crooked-head Sun, paternal aunt of Yang Tsung-hsi and Yang Tsung-pao, forceful advocate of Meng Yü-lou's remarriage to Hsi-men Ch'ing after the latter offers her a hundred taels of silver for her support, quarrels with Chang Lung when he tries to prevent this match.

Yang Chien (d. 1121), Commander Yang, eunuch military officer related to Ch'en Hung by marriage, commander in chief of the Imperial Guard in the Eastern Capital, bribed by Hsi-men Ch'ing to intervene on his behalf against Wu Sung and in favor of Hua Tzu-hsü, impeached by Yü-wen Hsü-chung, reported in a letter from Chai Ch'ien to Hsi-men Ch'ing to have died in prison in 1117.

Yang, Commander. See Yang Chien.

Yang the Elder. See Yang Kuang-yen.

Yang Erh-feng, second son of Yang Pu-lai and his wife, née Pai, younger brother of Yang Kuang-yen, a gambler and tough guy who scares off Ch'en Ching-chi when he tries to recover the half shipload of property that Yang Kuang-yen had stolen from him.

Yang Kuang-yen, Yang the Elder, Iron Fingernail, native of Nobottom ward in Carryoff village of Makebelieve district in Nonesuch subprefecture, son of Yang Pu-lai and his wife, née Pai, disciple of the Barefaced Adept from whom he acquires the art of lying, husband of Miss Died-of-fright, con man employed by Ch'en Ching-chi who absconds with half a shipload of his property while he is in Yen-chou trying to shake down Meng Yü-lou and invests it in the Hsieh Family Tavern in Lin-ch'ing only to lose everything when Ch'en Ching-chi sues him with the backing of Chou Hsiu and takes over ownership of the tavern.

Yang Kuang-yen's father. See Yang Pu-lai.

Yang Kuang-yen's mother, née Pai.

Yang Kuang-yen's page boy.

Yang Kuang-yen's wife. See Died-of-fright, Miss.

Yang, Poor-parent. See Yang Pu-lai.

Yang, Prefect. See Yang Shih.

Yang Pu-lai, Poor-parent Yang, father of Yang Kuang-yen and Yang Erh-feng, brother-in-law of Yao the Second.

Yang Sheng, factotum on the domestic staff of Yang Chien.

Yang Shih (1053–1135), Prefect Yang, prefect of K'ai-feng, protégé of Ts'ai Ching, agrees under pressure from Ts'ai Ching and Yang Chien to treat Hua Tzu-hsü leniently when he is sued over the division of Eunuch Director Hua's property by his brothers Hua Tzu-yu, Hua Tzu-kuang, and Hua Tzu-hua.

Yang T'ing-p'ei, battalion commander rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Yang Tsung-hsi, deceased first husband of Meng Yü-lou, elder brother of Yang Tsung-pao, nephew on his father's side of Aunt Yang and on his mother's side of Chang Lung, textile merchant residing on Stinkwater Lane outside the South Gate of Ch'ing-ho.

Yang Tsung-hsi's maternal uncle. See Chang Lung.

Yang Tsung-hsi's mother. See Chang Lung's elder sister.

Yang Tsung-hsi's paternal aunt. See Yang, Aunt.

Yang Tsung-pao, younger brother of Yang Tsung-hsi, nephew on his father's side of Aunt Yang and on his mother's side of Chang Lung, brother-in-law of Meng Yü-lou.

Yang Wei-chung (1067–1132), commander-general of the Shansi region who leads the forces of Tse-lu against the Chin invaders.

Yao family from outside the Eastern Capital, poor family into which Sun Hsüeh-o is reincarnated as a daughter.

Yao the Second, brother-in-law of Yang Pu-lai, neighbor of Wu Chih to whom Wu Sung entrusts his orphaned niece Ying-erh when he is condemned to military exile in Meng-chou; gives Ying-erh back to Wu Sung when he returns to Ch'ing-ho five years later only to repossess her after the inquest on P'an Chin-lien's murder when Wu Sung once more becomes a fugitive; later arranges for her marriage.

Yeh the Ascetic, one-eyed illiterate Buddhist ascetic employed as a cook by Abbot Hsiao-yüeh of the Water Moon Monastery outside the South Gate of Ch'ing-ho, physiognomizes Ch'en Ching-chi when he is reduced to penury and working nearby as a day laborer.

Yeh Ch'ien, prefect of Lai-chou in Shantung.

Yeh the Fifth, wife of Pen Ti-ch'uan, mother of Pen Chang-chieh, originally a wet nurse who elopes with her fellow employee Pen Ti-ch'uan, carries on an intermittent affair with Tai-an while at the same time complaisantly accepting the sexual favors of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Yen the Fourth, neighbor of Han Tao-kuo who informs him of Hsi-men Ch'ing's death when their boats pass each other on the Grand Canal at Lin-ch'ing.

Yen P'o-hsi, singing girl slain by Sung Chiang.

Yen Shun, Brocade Tiger, outlaw chieftan of the Ch'ing-feng Stronghold on Ch'ing-feng Mountain who is persuaded by Sung Chiang to let the captured Wu Yüeh-niang go rather than allowing Wang Ying to make her his wife.

Yin Chih, Good Deed, chief clerk in charge of the files in the Ch'ing-ho office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission who

recognizes that Lai-wang has been framed by Hsi-men Ch'ing and manages to get his sentence reduced and to have him treated more leniently.

Yin Ching, vice-minister of the Ministry of Personnel.

Yin Ta-liang, regional investigating censor of Liang-che, rewarded for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Yin T'ien-hsi, Year Star Yin, younger brother of Kao Lien's wife, née Yin, dissolute wastrel who takes advantage of his official connections to lord it over the Mount T'ai area with a gang of followers at his disposal, colludes with Shih Po-ts'ai, the corrupt head priest of the Temple of the Goddess of Iridescent Clouds on the summit of Mount T'ai, in attempting to rape Wu Yüeh-niang when she visits the temple on a pilgrimage after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing; later killed at Sung Chiang's behest by the outlaw, Li K'uei.

Yin, Year Star. See Yin T'ien-hsi.

Ying, Beggar. See Ying Po-chüeh.

Ying-ch'un, disciple of Abbot Wu Tsung-che of the Temple of the Jade Emperor outside the East Gate of Ch'ing-ho.

Ying-ch'un, senior maidservant of Li P'ing-erh who after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing agrees to be sent to the household of Chai Ch'ien in the Eastern Capital and is raped by Lai-pao on the way.

Ying the Elder, eldest son of the deceased silk merchant Master Ying, elder brother of Ying Po-chüeh, continues to operate his father's silk business in Ch'ing-ho.

Ying the Elder's wife.

Ying-erh, daughter of Wu Chih by his deceased first wife, niece of Wu Sung, much abused stepdaughter of P'an Chin-lien who turns her over to Dame Wang when she marries Hsi-men Ch'ing; repossessed by Wu Sung when he returns from the Eastern Capital after the death of her father; consigned to the care of his neighbor Yao the Second when he is condemned to military exile in Meng-chou after his first abortive attempt to avenge the murder of her father; taken back by Wu Sung on his return to Ch'ing-ho five

years later and forced to witness his disembowelment of P'an Chin-lien and decapitation of Dame Wang; repossessed by Yao the Second after the inquest and provided by him with a husband.

Ying, Master, father of Ying the Elder and Ying Po-chüeh, deceased silk merchant of Ch'ing-ho.

Ying Pao, eldest son of Ying Po-chüeh, recommends his friend Lai-yu to Hsi-men Ch'ing who employs him as a servant and changes his name to Lai-chüeh.

Ying Po-chüeh, Ying the Second, Sponger Ying, Beggar Ying, son of the deceased silk merchant Master Ying, younger brother of Ying the Elder, father of Ying Pao and two daughters by his wife, née Tu, and a younger son by his concubine Ch'un-hua; having squandered his patrimony and fallen on hard times he has been reduced to squiring wealthy young rakes about the licensed quarters and living by his wits; boon companion and favorite crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten; a clever and amusing sycophant and opportunist he has the art to openly impose on Hsi-men Ch'ing and make him like it while he is alive and the gall to double-cross him without compunction as soon as he is dead.

Ying Po-chüeh's concubine. See Ch'un-hua.

Ying Po-chüeh's elder daughter, married with the financial assistance of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Ying Po-chüeh's grandfather, friend of Licentiate Shui's grandfather.

Ying Po-chüeh's second daughter, after the death of her father she is proposed by Auntie Hsüeh as a match for Ch'en Ching-chi but turned down by P'ang Ch'un-mei for lack of a dowry.

Ying Po-chüeh's son by his concubine Ch'un-hua.

Ying Po-chüeh's wife, née Tu, mother of Ying Pao and two daughters.

Ying the Second. See Ying Po-chüeh.

Ying, Sponger. See Ying Po-chüeh.

Yu, Loafer. See Yu Shou.

Yu Shou, Loafer Yu, a dissolute young scamp upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system.

Yung-ting, page boy in the household of Wang Ts'ai.

Yü, Big Sister, blind professional singer in Ch'ing-ho frequently invited into Hsi-men Ch'ing's household to entertain his womenfolk and their guests.

Yü Ch'un, Stupid Yu, one of the "cribbers" in the licensed quarter of Ch'ing-ho who plays the tout to Wang Ts'ai on his visits to the licensed quarter and upon whom Hsi-men Ch'ing turns the tables by abusing the judicial system at the behest of Lady Lin.

Yü-erh. See Sun Hsüeh-o.

Yü-hsiao, Jade Flute, senior maidservant of Wu Yüeh-niang, carries on an affair with Shu-t'ung the discovery of which by P'an Chin-lien leads him to abscond and return to his native Su-chou; after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing agrees to be sent to the household of Chai Ch'ien in the Eastern Capital and is raped by Lai-pao on the way.

Yü, Licentiate, master of a girls' school in his home in Ch'ing-ho where P'an Chin-lien studies for three years as a child.

Yü-lou. See Meng Yü-lou.

Yü Shen (d. 1132), minister of war who suppresses Tseng Hsiao-hsü's memorial impeaching Hsia Yen-ling and Hsi-men Ch'ing for malfeasance in the case of Miao Ch'ing, rewarded with the title grand guardian of the heir apparent for his part in facilitating the notorious Flower and Rock Convoys and the construction of the Mount Ken Imperial Park.

Yü, Stupid. See Yü Ch'un.

Yü-t'ang, employed in Chou Hsiu's household as a wet nurse for Chou Chin-ko.

Yü-tsan, concubine of Li Kung-pi, originally maidservant of his deceased first wife, who enters his household as part of her dowry, reacts jealously to his marriage with Meng Yü-lou and is beaten by him and sold out of the household.

Yü-wen, Censor. See Yü-wen Hsü-chung.

Yü-wen Hsü-chung (1079–1146), Censor Yü-wen, supervising secretary of the Office of Scrutiny for War who submits a memorial to the throne impeaching Ts'ai Ching, Wang Fu, and Yang Chien.

Yüan, Commander, resident of Potter's Alley in the Eastern Capital into whose family Li P'ing-erh is reincarnated as a daughter.

Yüan-hsiao, senior maidservant of Li Chiao-erh who is transferred to the service of Hsi-men Ta-chieh at the request of Ch'en Ching-chi after her former mistress leaves the household, accompanies her new mistress through her many vicissitudes while also putting up with the capricious treatment of Ch'en Ching-chi in whose service she dies after he is reduced to penury.

Yüan Yen, professional actor from Su-chou who specializes in playing subsidiary female roles.

Yüeh Ho-an, vice-magistrate of Ch'ing-ho.

Yüeh-kuei, concubine of Chou Hsiu much abused by P'ang Ch'un-mei.

Yüeh-niang. See Wu Yüeh-niang.

Yüeh the Third, next door neighbor of Han Tao-kuo on Lion Street who fences Miao Ch'ing's stolen goods and suggests that he approach Hsi-men Ch'ing through Wang Liu-erh to get him off the hook for the murder of Miao T'ien-hsiu.

Yüeh the Third's wife, close friend of Wang Liu-erh who acts as an intermediary in Miao Ch'ing's approach to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Yün, Assistant Regional Commander, elder brother of Yün Li-shou, hereditary military officer who dies at his post on the frontier.

Yün-ko. See Ch'iao Yün-ko.

Yün Li-shou, Welsher Yün, Yün the Second, younger brother of Assistant Regional Commander Yün, crony of Hsi-men Ch'ing, member of the brotherhood of ten, manager employed by Hsi-men Ch'ing in various of his enterprises, upon the death of his elder brother succeeds to his rank and the substantive post of vice commander of the Ch'ing-ho Left Guard, later appointed stockade commander of Ling-pi Stockade at Chi-nan where Wu Yüeh-niang

seeks refuge with him from the invading Chin armies but dreams that he attempts to rape her.

Yün Li-shou's daughter, betrothed while still a babe in arms to Hsi-men Hsiao-ko.

Yün Li-shou's wife, née Su, proposes a marriage alliance to Wu Yüeh-niang while they are both pregnant and formally betroths her daughter to Hsi-men Hsiao-ko after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Yün, Little. See Ch'iao Yün-ko.

Yün, Prince of. See Chao K'ai.

Yün the Second. See Yün Li-shou.

Yün, Welsher. See Yün Li-shou.

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THE PLUM IN THE GOLDEN VASE

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Chapter 21

WU YÜEH-NIANG SWEEPS SNOW IN ORDER TO BREW TEA; YING PO-CHÜEH RUNS ERRANDS ON BEHALF OF FLOWERS

Troubled in her sorrowing heart,
she murmurs to herself,
"This good affinity has turned out
to be a bad affinity."[1]
In retrospect she rails against
that "willow" in the quarter;[2]
Though shamefaced to confront
the "lotus" of the Jade Well.[3]
Only because his spring dalliance
has been carelessly revealed,
Have the phoenix mates been forced
to go their separate ways.
Who is able to dip up the waters
of the River of Heaven,
That they may wash their former sins
completely away?[4]

THE STORY GOES that by the time Hsi-men Ch'ing returned home from the quarter it was already the second watch. When the page boys had succeeded in getting someone to open the front door he dismounted and:

Trampling the scattered fragments of alabaster and jade,

made his way as far as the inner gate which led into the rear compound. He found the gate standing half open though there was:

Not a human sound to be heard,[5]

from the courtyard within.

From his mouth no word was uttered, but

In his heart he thought to himself,

"There's something strange about this."

Thereupon Hsi-men Ch'ing stealthily took up a position behind the whitewashed spirit screen just inside the gate in order to see what was up. No sooner had he done so than he saw Hsiao-yü come out and set up a table in the courtyard beneath the loggia that ran along one side.

It so happens that Wu Yüeh-niang, ever since the falling out with her husband that had resulted in their no longer being on speaking terms with each other, had been in the habit of fasting on the seventh, seventeenth, and twenty-seventh days of each month. On these occasions she would pay obeisance to the dipper and burn incense at night, praying to Heaven that it would protect her husband and grant him an early change of heart so that he could devote himself to the regulation of the household and the begetting of an heir in order to accomplish:

The plan of a lifetime.[6]

Hsi-men Ch'ing was quite unaware of this. He continued to look on as Hsiao-yü finished setting out the incense table. Before long Yüeh-niang emerged from her quarters, carefully attired, and proceeded into the courtyard where she ignited a full censer of incense.

Looking up at the sky and making a deep bow she prayed, "Your humble servant, nee Wu, has been joined in wedlock with Hsi-men Ch'ing. However, because my husband is enamored of the 'mist and flowers'; though yet in the prime of life, he remains without an heir. Wife and concubines, there are six of us in all, but none of us has borne a child, so that we lack anyone to continue the care and worship of the ancestral graves. Day and night I worry about this lest we be left with no recourse. Therefore, without my husband's

knowledge, I have sworn an oath that on the seventh, seventeenth, and twenty-seventh of each month, beneath the moon and stars, I shall offer up a prayer to the ‘three luminaries,’ beseeching them to protect my husband and grant him an early change of heart, that he may abandon his extravagant ways and devote himself wholeheartedly to family affairs. That one of his six consorts, no matter which, should soon bear him a son, in order to accomplish:

The plan of a lifetime,
is my sincerest wish.”

Truly:

As she slips out of her chamber
the night air is cool;
Fragrant mist fills the courtyard,
the moon glimmers bright.
Bowing to Heaven, she spills out
all her heartfelt desires;
Quite unaware that anyone might be
listening beyond the wall.

Nothing might have happened if Hsi-men Ch’ing had not overheard this, but having heard Yüeh-niang’s prayer:

From his mouth no word was uttered, but
In his heart he thought to himself,

“It turns out I’ve been mistaken in my resentment toward her all this time. Everything she said was inspired by concern for my welfare. She and I really are husband and wife after all.”

Suiting action to words, he strode out from behind the whitewashed spirit screen and embraced Yüeh-niang. His wife, who had just finished with the incense burning and never expected him to show up on such a snowy night, was so startled that her first impulse was to flee back to her room. But Hsi-men Ch’ing prevented this by embracing her with both arms.

“Darling,” he said, “I had absolutely no idea that you’ve really been inspired by concern for me. I’ve been wrong about you all this

time I've been giving you the cold shoulder. By now, I'm afraid, it's rather late to repent."

"You must have lost your way in the snow," said Yüeh-niang. "I dare say these really aren't the quarters you're looking for, anyway. You're barking up the wrong tree. I'm that 'undutiful whore,' remember. Since there's nothing between us, where do you get that stuff about concern for you? What reason should you have to pay any further attention to me? If we were never to see each other again:

For a thousand years or all eternity,
it would be all right with me."

Hsi-men Ch'ing took Yüeh-niang by the hand and pulled her into the room where he proceeded to look her over by lamplight. She was wearing her usual attire: a scarlet jacket of Lu-chou silk that opened down the middle, and a skirt of a soft yellow material. On her head she wore a sable toque over her chignon and, in front of her coiffure, a tiara of gold representing "Kuan-yin in her full glory," setting off to perfection:

Her silver salver face, modeled in plaster,
carved of jade;
The clouds over Ch'u peaks, her cicada chignon
and raven tresses.

How could Hsi-men Ch'ing have been anything but captivated?

Without further ado, he made a deep bow before Yüeh-niang, saying, "I, Hsi-men Ch'ing, have been so deluded for a time that I have failed to heed your sound advice and flouted your good intentions. Truly:

Though I have eyes I have failed to identify
the 'Jade of the Ch'u Mountains';
And have treated it as though it were
no more than an ordinary stone.[7]
It is after the event that one recognizes a gentleman;[8]
Then and only then does the good man become known.

All I can do is hope that you'll forgive me."

“I’m not the one you’ve set your heart on,” said Yüeh-niang. “No matter what I do, I don’t seem to be able to suit your fancy. Since when did I ever offer you any sound advice? Just leave me alone in my room here to:

Fend for myself.[9]

There’s no need for you to pay any attention to me. There isn’t room for you in here, anyway. You’d better get out of here before I have the maids throw you out.”

“I’ve had:

A bellyful of anger,[10]

out of the blue today,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “and came home through the snow just to tell you about it.”

“Whether you get angry or not is no concern of mine,” said Yüeh-niang. “Far be it from me to try to control your conduct. Why don’t you go tell it to someone who does?”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing saw that Yüeh-niang refused to give him so much as a look, he bent his knees, adopted the posture of a dwarf, and knelt down on the ground before her.

Sticking out his neck like a chicken
on the chopping block,[11]

he began to plead with her, saying, “Darling this,” and, “Darling that.”

Yüeh-niang could abide it no longer and said, “If you’re really going to carry on that shamelessly, I’ll call the maid.”

As good as her word, she called out for Hsiao-yü.

When Hsi-men Ch’ing saw Hsiao-yü coming in, he promptly leapt to his feet and, casting about for an excuse to get her out of the room, said, “The snow outside must have covered the incense table by now. Why don’t you go bring it inside?”

“I’ve already brought it in,” said Hsiao-yü.

Yüeh-niang couldn’t help laughing. “What a shameless character,” she said. “Even the maids have to put up with your barefaced effrontery.”

Hsiao-yü went out and Hsi-men Ch'ing once again got down on his knees to plead with his wife.

"If I didn't care for the opinion of the world,"[12] said Yüeh-niang, "it would serve you right if I paid you no heed for another hundred years."

Only after this speech did Yüeh-niang consent to sit down with her husband and order Yü-hsiao to serve him some tea. Hsi-men Ch'ing thereupon told her the whole story, how that day, after the meeting of the club at Ch'ang Shih-chieh's place had broken up, he had allowed himself to be persuaded by Ying Po-chüeh and the others to pay a visit to the Li family establishment, and how, thus and so, they had gotten into an altercation.

"I had the page boys tear the Li place apart," he said. "If the others hadn't intervened, I would have done worse. I've sworn an oath never to cross the threshold of the quarter again."

"Whether you go there or not is no concern of mine," said Yüeh-niang. "I wouldn't presume to tell such a simpleton what to do. But as long as you're shelling out the hard cash to maintain her as your mistress, if you don't even bother to visit her, you can be sure she'll manage to take on someone else. Where people in that profession are concerned:

You can tie up their bodies, but
You can't tie up their hearts.

Do you really think you can put your seal on her and make it stick?"

"What you say is true enough," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Thereupon, he started to undress, sent the maids out of the room, and proposed to go to bed with Yüeh-niang and seek his pleasure with her.

"If I let you into the kitchen,
You'll only make a pig of yourself,"

said Yüeh-niang. "It's concession enough if I allow you into my bed tonight. If you've got anything else in mind, forget it."

Hsi-men Ch'ing responded by exposing his organ to Yüeh-niang.

"It's all your doing," he joked. "You've made him so angry he's having a dumbstruck fit."

“What do you mean ‘he’s having a dumbstruck fit’?” demanded Yüeh-niang.

“If he’s not having a dumbstruck fit,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “how come his eye is bulging so wide, but he can’t get a word out?”

“You must be delirious,” responded Yüeh-niang. “What makes you think I’ve got even half an eye for the likes of you?”

At this point Hsi-men Ch’ing:

Without permitting any further explanation,

lifted Yüeh-niang’s two fresh white legs onto his shoulders, inserted his organ into her vagina,[13] and gave free rein to:

The oriole’s abandon and the butterfly’s pursuit.
Entranced by the clouds and intoxicated by the rain,
They are not yet willing to call a halt.[14]

Truly, it is a case of:

Among the crab apple boughs, orioles
dart quickly to and fro;
Between the halcyon hued rafters, swallows
parley incessantly.[15]

Before they knew it they arrived at that stage in which:

The transfusing touch of the magic rhinoceros horn
Produces a pleasure that cannot be exceeded.
Her musky tongue is partially protruded,
The fragrance of her rouge pervades his lips.

When Hsi-men Ch’ing’s excitement was at its height he softly besought Yüeh-niang to call him “Daddy.” Yüeh-niang accordingly:

Beneath lowered curtains, on their shared pillow,[16]
Responded as voluptuously as anyone could ask,[17]

calling him “Darling” without cease.

That night the two of them indulged:

The passions evoked by clouds and rain,
Joining their heads and twining their necks,

within the bed curtains. Truly:

When feelings converge, one is apt to forget
what happens to a brocade girdle;

When overcome by excitement, who cares about
the dropping of a golden hairpin?

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Coiffure in disarray, hairpins askew,[18]
she is deeply stirred;
Her passions in full sway, she dreads
the interminable night.
At evening, all alone, she stands
before her dressing mirror;
Not bothering to paint her eyebrows
into pale spring peaks.[19]

That evening husband and wife enjoyed themselves together. But no more of this.

To resume our story, the next day, bright and early in the morning, Meng Yü-lou paid a visit to P'an Chin-lien's quarters. Before going in she called out, "Is that slavey, Number Six, up yet?"

"Mother's just gotten up. She's doing her hair," said Ch'un-mei. "Won't you come in and sit down, Third Lady?"

Meng Yü-lou went inside and found Chin-lien sitting in front of her dressing mirror combing her fragrant clouds of hair.

"I've come to tell you about something that's happened," she said. "Do you know about it yet?"

"In an out-of-the-way corner like this," said Chin-lien, "how would I ever hear about anything? Really, what's up?"

"When Father got home last night during the second watch," said Yü-lou, "he went into the master suite and made it up with Mistress Wu. He spent the night in her room."

"We tried so hard to persuade her," said Chin-lien, "and she kept repeating that she'd never make it up with him in a hundred or two hundred years. Now she's wantonly taken the initiative by foisting herself upon him without any further urging."

"I only found out about it this morning," said Yü-lou. "My senior maid, Lan-hsiang, overheard the page boys talking about it in the

kitchen. It seems that yesterday Father and Ying the Second were having a drink at Li Kuei-chieh's house in the quarter when they caught the whore out at something and smashed the place to pieces. He came home through the snow in high dudgeon and when he reached the inner gate found the First Lady burning night incense. He must have overheard something that brought about a reconciliation between them.

"According to her maid, the two of them talked away the night together. She said Father got down on his knees to the First Lady, calling her 'Mother,' and that the First Lady herself put on such a show it was enough to give you the creeps. I guess if she chooses to carry on that way there's nothing more to be said about it. But if it had been anyone else, you can be sure she would have been ticked off for her wantonness."

"It's lucky for her she's a principal wife," said Chin-lien, picking up where Yü-lou had left off. "Who knows what she's capable of?

She's such a practiced old hand.

If you're going to burn night incense you ought to do your praying silently. Whoever heard of making a performance out of it only in order to attract your husband's attention? The very idea! Without any urging, to go and make it up with your husband on the sly. It would have been more becoming of her to tough it out with him. She's forever hypocritically protesting her own virtue."

"It's not just a case of hypocritically protesting her own virtue," said Yü-lou. "She really wanted to make it up with him, but couldn't bring herself to admit it. She may have claimed to be:

A crazy wife who will never give in,

but that was only because she was afraid that if she allowed us to intercede we might:

Engage in idle tittle-tattle,[20]

at her expense after the fact, saying that, 'when the two of you had that altercation it was only thanks to our intervention that you were reconciled.' Instead of which, the one of them happened to come home in high dudgeon from the quarter just when the other was burning night incense. A perfect coincidence! Truly:

In seeking a match they dispensed with
both go-between and witness;
Secretly tying their love-knot together
all by themselves.

“Right now you and I must contrive some way to prevent her from hogging all the credit. As soon as you’ve done with your hair, go tell Li P’ing-erh about it. If the two of us each come up with five mace of silver, we ought to be able to get Li P’ing-erh to contribute a tael, since she was the occasion of the whole to-do in the first place. Then we can throw a party today. On the one hand, it will give us a chance to offer a toast to the couple, and on the other hand, it will provide a fitting occasion for the master and mistress of the household to appreciate the snow and enjoy themselves for a day. Why not?”

“You’re right,” responded Chin-lien. “I wonder if Father has any prior commitments today.”

“During a heavy snow like this, what commitments could he have?” said Yü-lou. “When I came over here the two of them hadn’t even stirred. The door to the master suite had just been opened and Hsiao-yü was taking in the water.”

Chin-lien hastily finished doing her hair and accompanied Yü-lou over to Li P’ing-erh’s quarters. They found her still in bed.

“The Third Lady and the Fifth Lady have come to see you,” Ying-ch’un reported.

Yü-lou and Chin-lien went inside, saying, “Sister Li, you’ve really got it made. Still abed at such an hour.

The lazy dragon is just beginning to uncoil itself.”

Chin-lien stuck her hand in under the quilt and discovered an incense burner for fumigating the bedclothes in the shape of a silver globe.[21]

“Sister Li has laid an egg.” she said, pulling aside the covers as she spoke and revealing the white flesh of the body that lay within.

Li P’ing-erh made haste to get into her clothes.

“That’s enough of your tricks, Fifth Sister,” said Yü-lou. “Sister Li, it’s time you got up. There’s something we’ve come to tell you

about. Yesterday, thus and so, Father and our elder sister were reconciled. Each of us is going to put up five mace of silver. You ought to give a little more since you were the occasion of the trouble between them in the first place. It's snowing heavily today and we really ought to do something to appreciate the snow. So we thought we'd throw a party and invite Father and our elder sister, to spend some time with us. What do you say?"

"I'll be happy to contribute whatever you suggest," said Li P'ing-erh.

"A tael ought to be sufficient," said Chin-lien. "Weigh it out so we can go back to the rear compound and see what we can get from Li Chiao-erh and Sun Hsüeh-o."

Li P'ing-erh put on her clothes and bound her feet, telling Ying-ch'un, in the meantime, to open the trunk and get out the silver. She came up with a piece which Chin-lien put in the scale and found to weigh one tael, two mace, and five candareens.

Yü-lou suggested that Chin-lien stay and keep Li P'ing-erh company while she did her hair. "I'll go back to the rear compound myself and see what I can get from Li Chiao-erh and Sun Hsüeh-o," she said.

Chin-lien looked on as Li P'ing-erh washed her face and worked on her hair. Nearly two hours elapsed before Yü-lou returned from the rear compound.

"If I'd only known, I never would have undertaken this business," she complained. "It's something that concerns us all, and yet you'd think I was trying to get something for nothing out of her. The little whore said, 'I'm so out of favor our husband doesn't bother to come into my room anymore. Where would I get any silver from?' When I insisted, she wouldn't come up with so much as a mace. I pled with her for half the day before she produced this silver hairpin. Put it in the scale and see how much it weighs."

Chin-lien did as she was told and it was found to weigh only three mace and seven candareens.

"What about Li Chiao-erh?" she asked.

“At first she said, ‘I don’t have anything of my own,’ ” reported Yü-lou. “ ‘Although the money for household expenses may pass through my hands every day, everything has to be accounted for. I only receive enough to defray actual costs. There isn’t anything left over.’ I had to argue with her half the day before I got anywhere. ‘How can you say you don’t have any money to spare when you’re in charge of the household expenses,’ I demanded. ‘It’s not as though the rest of us are any better off. Are you claiming that:

The summer sun just happened to skip your door?

It’s something that concerns us all, but you’re just not going to cooperate. So much for that!’ I had to stalk off in a huff before she was embarrassed enough to send the maid after me and come up with something at last. All this trouble for no reason at all!”

Chin-lien took Li Chiao-erh’s contribution and put it in the scale. It came to just four mace and eight candareens.

“That simulating whore!” she cursed. “No matter what happens, even without any other funny business, she simply will not give full value, but is always just a little short.”

“She’s quick enough to get out the big scale with its yellow yard and weigh out the money[22] when it’s for herself,” said Yü-lou, “but if you want to get anything out of *her*, it’s like trying to extract it from her bones. Nobody has a good word to say for her.”

When they had toted up the money, which came to three taels and one mace in all, including the contributions of Yü-lou and Chin-lien, they sent Hsiu-ch’un to fetch Tai-an.

Before anything else, Chin-lien asked him, “When you were out with Father yesterday, what was the altercation at the Li place all about?”

Tai-an told them the whole story. “They had a meeting of their club at Ch’ang Shih-chieh’s house, but it broke up early, and Father ended up accompanying Messrs. Ying and Hsieh to Li Kuei-chieh’s place. The madam reported that she was not at home, having gone to her fifth maternal aunt’s house to celebrate her birthday. Who would have thought that, some time later, when Father went to the back of the establishment to relieve himself, he found the painted

face and a Southerner drinking wine together and realized she had been giving him the slip. He was so enraged that:

Without permitting any further explanation,

he ordered us to tear the whore's place apart and would have had the Southerner and the painted face locked up together in the gatehouse had Ying the Second and the others not intervened. Father then got on his horse and came home in a huff, swearing along the way that he would take steps to settle the whore's hash."

"That lousy whore!" exclaimed Chin-lien. "I'll bet she thought she had:

A permanent grip on the honey jar,

but now, somehow or other:

It's ended up smashed to pieces."[23]

"Did Father really say that?" she asked Tai-an.

"Would I have the nerve to deceive you?" he replied.

"You lousy jailbird," said Chin-lien. "Even if he does neglect her, she is your master's mistress, after all. Since when are you entitled to curse her? I remember how it was at the outset, whenever I asked you to do anything you used to claim you were too busy. 'Father has sent me to deliver some money to Auntie Kuei's place,' you used to say, giving such a sweet inflection to the words 'Auntie Kuei.' Now that she's fallen out of favor and your master's angry with her, even you start calling her a whore. Just wait and see if I don't tell your father about it the next chance I get."

"Ai-ya, Fifth Lady," exclaimed Tai-an.

"The sun must have risen in the West today,[24]

that you should be taking her part for a change. If Father hadn't called her a whore on the way home, do you think I would have dared do so?"

"If your father cursed her, that's his business," said Chin-lien. "Does that entitle you to do so?"

"If I'd known you were going to give me such a hard time about it, Fifth Lady," said Tai-an, "I never would have mentioned it to you."

“That’s enough out of you, you little jailbird,” said Yü-lou. “Here are three taels and one mace of silver, with which we want you and Lai-hsing to go buy some things for us, thus and so. We’re planning to give a party today and invite your father and the First Lady to join us, so we can enjoy the snow and have a drink together. If you can manage to give us a break on the squeeze, I’ll get the Fifth Lady not to tell your father what you said.”

“If you send me on an errand,” said Tai-an, “would I have the nerve to take any squeeze?”

Thereupon, together with Lai-hsing, he went off to buy the provisions.

To resume our story, Hsi-men Ch’ing had just gotten up and was performing his ablutions in the master suite when he saw Lai-hsing coming through the snow on his way to the kitchen with a chicken, a goose, and other comestibles, while Tai-an came in carrying a jug of Chin-hua wine.

“Who’s that stuff for, that the servants are bringing in?” he asked Hsiao-yü.

“The ladies of the house are giving a party today,” said Hsiao-yü. “They’re going to invite you and the First Lady to join them in order to enjoy the snow.”

“Where does that Chin-hua wine come from,” asked Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“The Third Lady gave me the money to buy it,” said Tai-an.

“Ai-ya,” exclaimed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “We’ve got plenty of wine in the house already. What need is there to go out and buy any more?”

“Take the key to the anteroom on the west side of the front courtyard,” he instructed Tai-an, “and bring back two jugs of the high-quality jasmine wine you’ll find there. We can mix some of this wine in with it.”

Thereupon, in the living room of the master suite that opened onto the rear courtyard:

> Standing screens and brocaded windbreaks like Shih Ch’ung’s[25] were set up;

Warming drapes of oiled paper sprigged with plum
blossoms were suspended.
Braziers were filled with animal-shaped briquettes;
All the appurtenances of a feast were duly arrayed.

It was not long before the necessary preparations in the kitchen were completed and Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, and Li P'ing-erh came to invite Hsi-men Ch'ing and Yüeh-niang to join them.

Thereupon, Li Chiao-erh served the drinks, Meng Yü-lou held the flagon, P'an Chin-lien proffered the side dishes, and Li P'ing-erh also got down on her knees beside them. The first drink was offered to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Taking the cup in his hand, Hsi-men Ch'ing said, with a laugh, "My children, you've gone to a lot of trouble just to please the old man. A bow will suffice."

P'an Chin-lien, who was always quick on the uptake, interjected, "That's enough of your airs, my son. Do you think anyone here is going to kowtow to you while you remain on your feet? You're just like:

The ramshorn scallion that grows by the southern wall;
The longer it stays there the hotter it gets.[26]

If you don't get down on your knees you'll:

Forfeit a myriad years worth of fodder.[27]

If it weren't for our elder sister, who do you think would be kowtowing to you today?"

Thereupon, after Hsi-men Ch'ing had been offered the first drink, the cup was refilled to the brim and Yüeh-niang was asked to assume the place of honor so that a drink could be offered to her in turn.

"None of you spoke a word about it," said Yüeh-niang. "Who would have thought you would go to so much trouble on my account?"

"It doesn't amount to anything," laughed Yü-lou. "We just thought we'd offer a cup of watery wine to our patriarch and

matriarch after this heavy snow, to help them dispel their gloom. Sister, please be seated and accept our salutations."

Yüeh-niang refused to permit this and insisted on kowtowing to them in return.

"Unless you agree to be seated," said Yü-lou, "the rest of us will refuse to get up from our knees."

They bickered back and forth about it for some time before Yüeh-niang agreed to accept half a kowtow from them.

"Elder Sister," said Chin-lien, in jest, "it's only right that you should be forewarned. You may consent to forgive him this once, out of consideration for us, but if he should do anything of the kind to offend you again, we'll wash our hands of the whole affair."

Then, turning to Hsi-men Ch'ing, she continued, "What do you think you're doing, remaining in your seat up there:

Playing the fool and putting on airs?

Why aren't you down on your knees, offering Sister a cup of wine, and apologizing for your misconduct?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing merely laughed but did not move from his seat.

After Yüeh-niang was finally induced to accept the proffered drink, she got up from her place, ordered Yü-hsiao to hold the flagon, and poured a drink in return for each of her sisters. Only Sun Hsüeh-o received the wine on her knees. The others all accepted theirs with the ceremony appropriate to sisters of equal standing.

Thereupon, Hsi-men Ch'ing and Yüeh-niang occupied the seats of honor at the head of the table, while Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, Li P'ing-erh, Sun Hsüeh-o, and Hsi-men Ta-chieh ranged themselves on either side.

"Sister Li," said Chin-lien, "you really ought to offer our elder sister a cup of wine yourself, since you were the occasion of the whole to-do in the first place.

You hardly have to be as stiff as wood, like Old Lin."[28]

Li P'ing-erh actually rose from her seat and was going to follow Chin-lien's suggestion, but Hsi-men Ch'ing stopped her, saying, "Don't pay any attention to that little whore, she's only fooling.

We've already been presented with a round of drinks. There's no need for any more."

Only then did Li P'ing-erh desist.

Thereupon, Ch'un-mei, Ying-ch'un, Yü-hsiao, and Lan-hsiang, the four household musicians, struck up a tune on their instruments, the *p'i-p'a*, psaltery, three-stringed banjo, and mandola. They sang the southern-style song suite that begins with the tune "Pomegranate Blossoms" and opens with the words:

It was the night of their assignation,[29]

etc., etc.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this, he asked, "Whose idea was it to sing this particular suite?"

"The Fifth Lady told us to sing it," said Yü-hsiao.

Hsi-men Ch'ing gave P'an Chin-lien a look, saying, "You little whore! You can't resist the temptation to:

Fool with the branches and tug at the leaves,[30]

can you?"

"Who am I to tell them what to sing?" said Chin-lien. "You're just picking on me again."

"Why don't we ask our son-in-law to join us for a bit?" said Yüeh-niang, and, suiting her action to her words, she dispatched a page boy to the front compound to convey the invitation.

Before long Ch'en Ching-chi showed up and bowed to each member of the party before taking a seat next to Hsi-men Ta-chieh. Yüeh-niang ordered Hsiao-yü to provide him with a place setting. Now that the whole family was assembled:

Animal-shaped briquettes replenished golden braziers;
The finest wine of Yang-kao vintage was decanted.[31]

As they enjoyed the wine, Hsi-men Ch'ing glanced outside the rolled-up bamboo blinds and saw that the snow was falling heavily. It looked just like:

Shredded cotton wadding,[32] or
Wildly dancing pear blossoms.[33]

Truly, it was a magnificent snow. Behold:

Initially resembling willow catkins,
Gradually it turns into goose down.
Scarcely audible, it reminds one of crabs
moving across the sand;[34]
In rich profusion, it is like shattered alabaster
piled on the pavement.[35]
With every move one makes,
One's clothes catch six-pointed stars;
At every other moment,
One must brush away the bee's whiskers.[36]
Now it flurries, now it stops;
The Dragon Lord is yet rehearsing
the steps of his dance.
The power of spring remains weak;
The Jade Maiden is still entranced
producing her whirlwind.
Enhancing jasper terraces,
Jade dragon's-scales appear to
pervade the firmament.[37]
Brushing powdered foreheads,
White crane's-feathers seem to
settle gently to earth.[38]

Truly:

Congealing upon "towers of jade,"
its cold raises goose bumps;
Wavering before "silver seas,"
its dazzle creates a blur.[39]

When Wu Yüeh-niang saw how much snow had accumulated on the T'ai-hu rockery[40] in front of the spirit screen, she got up from her place, told Hsiao-yü to fetch the tea jar, and proceeded in person to sweep up enough snow to brew some Phoenix Tablet Sparrow Tongue tea from Chiang-nan for the company.[41] Truly:

Foaming whitecaps of brick tea,
break in white jade cups;

The pure bouquet of vintage wine,
bursts from the golden flagon.[42]

As they were enjoying the tea, who should come in but Tai-an, who reported, “Li Ming has come. He’s waiting in the front compound.”

“Tell him to come in,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Before long, Li Ming appeared. After performing a kowtow to the assembled company, he made a leg as well, and then stood deferentially to one side.

“You’ve arrived in the nick of time,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “Where’ve you been?”

“Nowhere in particular,” said Li Ming. “I’ve been teaching a couple of youngsters at Eunuch Director Liu’s house near Wine Vinegar Gate in the Northern Quarter. I thought I’d look in on them today, but then remembered that the young ladies at your place haven’t got some of their songs quite right yet, so I came over here to see what I could do.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing handed him what was left of the cup of tea, flavored with osmanthus and kumquats, that he had been drinking from, saying, “When you’ve finished with that, stick around and perform a song suite for us.”

“Whatever you say,” said Li Ming, retiring an appropriate distance to drink his tea.

When he had finished, he came forward, tuned the strings of his psaltery, and:

Commencing to sing in full voice;
Facing forward with his feet together,

launched into the song suite on winter that begins with the tune “Spring in the Metropolis” and opens with the words:

A cold wind has overspread the land,[43]

etc., etc.



Wu Yüeh-niang Sweeps Snow in Order to Brew Tea

When Li Ming had finished singing, Hsi-men Ch'ing called him over in order to reward him with a drink of wine. He told Hsiao-yü,

who was holding a round-handled chicken-crop flagon with a curved spout, to pour a full measure into a peach-shaped cup of silver-mounted cloisonné. Li Ming knelt on the ground and drank off three full cups. Hsi-men Ch'ing also selected from the delicacies on the table a saucerful of bulging white steamed buns, a bowl of clam broth flavored with leeks and marinated bamboo shoots, a platter of large slices of fat jellied goose, as well as saucersful of savory cured coney, steamed dried shad, and squab baked in junket, and handed them to Li Ming on a tray.

Li Ming retired an appropriate distance and gobbled it all down in:

Three mouthfuls and two swallows.[44]

When he had licked the platter clean and wiped his lips with a napkin, he came back and stood at attention beside the latticework partition.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then told him all about what had happened at Li Kuei-chieh's place the day before.

"I didn't hear a word about it," said Li Ming. "I haven't been over there very often recently. If you stop to think about it though, it's not really Kuei-chieh's fault. It's all the doing of our old madam, Li the Third. You mustn't be too upset about it. I'll give her a real telling off the next time I see her."

That day, the party continued until the first watch, and the wife and concubines of the household had a good time together. Ch'en Ching-chi and Hsi-men Ta-chieh were the first to leave, going straight back to their quarters in the front compound. After that, when the wine was about to run out, Hsi-men Ch'ing rewarded Li Ming with another drink and sent him on his way.

"If you go over there," said Hsi-men Ch'ing in parting, "don't say anything about having been here today."

"I understand," replied Li Ming.

Hsi-men Ch'ing ordered a servant to see him to the door and the front gate was closed for the night. Wife and concubines then went their separate ways, but Hsi-men Ch'ing spent another night with Yüeh-niang in the master suite. There is a poem that testifies to this:

A marriage affinity bound with red cord[45]
  is not to be doubted;
Having had to burn their door-bars for fuel,
  they are of one mind.[46]
Like fish and water, perfectly suited,[47]
  from this time forth;
Their mutual feelings will surely sustain
  a lifetime of bliss.[48]

To resume our story, by the next day the snow had cleared. Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta had been induced by the offer of a roast goose and a jug of wine to act as emissaries for the Li family establishment, which was worried that Hsi-men Ch'ing might be moved by anger to attempt the ruination of their house. They therefore showed up in order to respectfully invite Hsi-men Ch'ing to accompany them into the quarter and accept the proffered rites of propitiation.

Yüeh-niang had finished her morning toilet and was eating a breakfast snack with Hsi-men Ch'ing when who should come in but the page boy, Tai-an, with the report that Master Ying and Master Hsieh had come to visit and were waiting in the reception room out front.

Hsi-men Ch'ing put down the piece of pastry in his hand and was halfway out the door when Yüeh-niang stopped him, saying, "Who knows what those two ghost-snatching demons have come for? You might just as well finish your breakfast before rushing off to meet them. Let them cool their heels outside a while. What are you in such a fearful hurry to get out of here for, anyway? There's no telling where they'll drag you off to in the snow."

"Tell the page boy to bring the pastry out front," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "I'll share it with the two of them."

So saying, he got up and started out of the room.

"When you're through eating," Yüeh-niang instructed him, "don't allow yourself to be inveigled into going off somewhere with those two. After a heavy snow like this, you really ought to stay home and

relax for a change. Tonight we're going to celebrate the eve of Meng Yü-lou's birthday."

"I understand," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Thereupon, he went out to meet Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta, who greeted him with a bow, saying, "Brother, after you went home in a huff the other night, we really gave them a hard time. 'All this while,' we said, 'our brother's been:

Spending his money and wasting his goods,

here in your house. Even if he hasn't been around much lately, that's no reason for you to change your tune. After all, if you let your painted-face take up with some Southerner on the sly:

Enemies are apt to meet in narrow straits.[49]

If he catches them red-handed, how could he be anything but angry? And, quite aside from our brother's anger, we can hardly be expected to countenance such goings on ourselves.'

"Mother and daughters alike, we really told them a thing or two. They're all thoroughly embarrassed about the whole thing. Early this morning they invited us over to their place and got down on their knees to us with a good deal of weeping and wailing. They're so worried about what you might do in your anger that they've prepared a cup of watery wine and want you to come back so they can make it up to you."

"I'm no longer angry," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "but I'm not going back into the quarter anymore."

"It's only right that you should be annoyed," said Ying Po-chüeh. "If you stop to think about it though, it's not really Kuei-chieh's fault. That Ting the Second was actually a patron of her elder sister, Li Kuei-ch'ing, and never made any overtures to Kuei-chieh. It all originated out of the fact that his father's boatload of goods was moored next to the boat of a National University student, named Ch'en, who is a fellow townsman of his. This Ch'en, whose sobriquet is Liang-huai, only arrived two days ago. He's the son of Administration Vice Commissioner Ch'en who formerly served in the Palace Library.

“This Ting the Second had engaged to pay ten taels of silver for a party at the Li place in order to entertain his fellow townsman Mr. Ch’en. He had just stopped by to deliver the money when we showed up, and Kuei-chieh, unable to think of any other means of avoiding an awkward situation, concealed the presence of the Southerner by hiding him in the rear part of the compound, where you happened to catch sight of him.

“The truth of the matter is that he has never laid a hand on Kuei-chieh. Today, mother and daughters alike:

Swearing by the gods and uttering oaths,
Kowtowing and performing obeisances,

begged the two of us to do whatever we could to induce you to pay them a visit so they could explain this misunderstanding to you themselves and perhaps alleviate some of your anger.”

“I’ve already made a vow to my wife that I would never set foot in the place again,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “It’s not that I’m still angry or anything like that. You can tell them that they have no cause for further concern. I’ve got some matters to attend to at home today, so I really can’t go.”

This reply threw his two visitors into such consternation that they fell to their knees and spoke with one voice, saying, “Brother, how can you say such a thing? It may not matter for you not to go, but since they have asked us to intercede on their behalf, it would look as though we had so little influence with you that we couldn’t even get you to accede to an invitation. All you have to do is show up and sit for a while and then come home if you like.”

By the time the two of them finished with their pitch:

As though their lives depended on it,

they had talked Hsi-men Ch’ing into giving his assent.

Before long, a table was set up and their host invited them to share the remainder of his breakfast pastry with him. When they had finished eating, soon thereafter, Hsi-men Ch’ing sent Tai-an to fetch his outdoor clothes.

Yüeh-niang, who was sitting with Meng Yü-lou when he came in, asked Tai-an, “Where’s your father off to?”

“I have no idea,” said Tai-an. “He only told me to come fetch his clothes.”

“You lousy jailbird!” Yüeh-niang railed at him. “You think you can keep me in the dark, do you? If your father gets home late today, I’ll hold you personally accountable. We’re celebrating the eve of the Third Lady’s birthday tonight, so you’d better get him home in plenty of time. If you wait until:

The sky is black and the earth is dark,

I’ll see that you get a good beating, you lousy jailbird, if I have to do it myself.”

“Why should you beat me, Mother?” said Tai-an. “What have I got to do with it?”

“I don’t know why it is,” said Yüeh-niang, “but as soon as he heard those two gaffers had come, he took off as though his life depended on it. We were eating breakfast at the time, but he dropped his bowl and headed out the door on the spot. Who knows where they may drag him off to:

Parading the campground and disturbing the dead,

or when he’ll ever get home.”

It was the twenty-sixth day of the eleventh month, the eve of Meng Yü-lou’s birthday, and a family party had been prepared for the occasion. But no more of this.

To resume our story, Hsi-men Ch’ing accepted the invitation of his two friends to accompany them into the licensed quarter. The Li family establishment had already prepared a regular feast in their main reception room and engaged two singing girls to help with the entertainment. Li Kuei-chieh and Li Kuei-ch’ing, all dressed up for the occasion, met their guests at the door. The old procuress came out and knelt down to offer her apologies for the misunderstanding. The two sisters served the wine and Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta stood to either side, keeping up a steady stream of jokes and wisecracks.

“I wore away half the skin on my lips in getting your lover to come see you,” said Ying Po-chüeh to Kuei-chieh. “And now you’ve no further use for me and don’t even offer me a cup of wine. You’ve

only got eyes for your lover, I can see. If he'd kicked up a fuss and refused to come, just now, not only would you have cried yourself blind and been reduced to making your living as an itinerant singer, but nobody would have cared a straw about you anymore. It's only my skills as a mouthpiece that have saved you from such a fate."

"You crazy beggar!" Kuei-chieh railed at him. "You're delirious. I'd only be wasting my breath on you. So you think I'd be reduced to being an itinerant singer, do you?"

"Just look at the way the lousy little whore carries on," said Ying Po-chüeh.

"After the sutra has been recited,
She takes the stick to the monk.[50]

At this rate, she won't acknowledge anyone in the future. When he wouldn't come, you were all aflutter; but now that he's here:

Your wing feathers are dry enough for flight.[51]

Come over here and give me a kiss to fend off the cold."



Ying Po-chüeh Runs Errands on Behalf of Flowers

Thereupon:

Without permitting any further explanation,

he embraced her by the neck and gave her a kiss.

"You crazy chunk of knife-bait!" laughed Kuei-chieh. "Don't knock the wine all over Father."

"Little whore!" said Ying Po-chüeh. "I can see through your tricks. Right now you're so concerned about your lover, 'Don't knock the wine all over Father,' you say, giving such a sweet inflection to the word 'Father.' Am I nothing but a stepchild, that you haven't a word for me?"

"If I called you anything," said Kuei-chieh, "it would be 'my child.' "

"Come over here," said Ying Po-chüeh, "I've got a joke to tell you. A crab and a frog once swore brotherhood together and made a wager that whichever of them could jump over a ditch should be the elder brother. The frog made it to the other side in a hop or two. Just as the crab was about to jump, two girls came along to draw water and trussed him up with a piece of string to take home with them when they were through. They forgot about him when they were ready to leave, however, and neglected to take him. When the frog saw that his companion had not followed him he came back to see what had happened and asked, 'What's been keeping you?' 'I would have made it across,' said the crab, 'if I hadn't been tied up in knots by those two little whores.' "

Thereupon, the two sisters both took out after Ying Po-chüeh while Hsi-men Ch'ing laughed himself silly. They continued to enjoy themselves:

> Amid clustering blossoms and clinging brocade,
> Laughing and joking at each other's expense.

But no more of this.

To resume our story, back at home Wu Yüeh-niang had prepared a feast, partly in return for the one to which she had been treated the day before, and partly in order to celebrate the eve of Meng Yü-lou's birthday. Her sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K'ai, Aunt Yang, and two Buddhist nuns had been invited for the occasion and were seated in the master suite. As they waited the sun eventually set, but

still there was no sign of Hsi-men Ch'ing. Yüeh-niang was becoming extremely agitated.

At this point, P'an Chin-lien, tugging Li P'ing-erh by the hand, said to Yüeh-niang with a giggle, "Elder Sister, since he still hasn't shown up, why don't the two of us go out to the front gate and look out for him?"

"Who's got the patience to look out for him?" said Yüeh-niang.

Chin-lien also took Meng Yü-lou by the hand, saying, "Let the three of us go out to look for him together."

"I want to hear the joke the abbess is about to tell," said Yü-lou. "Let's wait till she's done before we go."

Only then was Chin-lien induced to stay.

As they sat in a circle around the two nuns to hear what jokes they would tell, she said, "We only go for meaty fare. Don't give us any of that vegetarian stuff."

"Let them tell us whatever they want," said Yüeh-niang. "Don't be so demanding."

"Elder Sister," said Chin-lien, "you may not realize it but the abbess here can really tell a joke if she wants to. The last time she was here in the rear compound we refused to let her off and she came up with a whole string of good ones."

Then, turning to the abbess, she said, "If you've got any, let's have them."

At this point,

Neither hurriedly nor hastily,

Nun Wang, who was sitting on the k'ang, said, "A certain man was walking down the road when he encountered a tiger who wanted to eat him. 'Spare my life,' said the man, 'for the sake of my eighty-year-old mother who has no one else to look after her. Or else come home with me. I've got a pig there I could let you eat.' The tiger accordingly spared him and accompanied the man back to his home, where he told his mother about it. His mother, who was making bean curd at the time, couldn't bear to relinquish the pig, so she said to her son, 'Why don't you give him a few pieces of bean curd

to eat?' 'You don't understand, Mother,' the son replied. 'He's not accustomed to vegetarian fare.' "

"That's no good," said Chin-lien. "We don't want to listen to any more of that vegetarian stuff. Let's have some meatier fare."

Nun Wang then told them another one. "A certain family with three daughters-in-law was celebrating the birthday of the head of the household. First it was the turn of the senior daughter-in-law to offer her father-in-law a cup of wine. 'Sir,' she said, 'you're just like a magistrate.' 'How am I like a magistrate?' the father-in-law asked. 'When you sit up there like that,' the daughter-in-law replied, 'everyone in the whole household is afraid of you. How can you say you're not like a magistrate?' Next it was the turn of the second daughter-in-law to offer a cup of wine. 'Sir,' she said, 'you're just like a yamen lictor of tigerlike ferocity.' 'How am I like a yamen lictor of tigerlike ferocity?' the father-in-law asked. 'When you shout a command,' the daughter-in-law replied, 'everyone in the whole household trembles. How can you say you're not like a yamen lictor?' You're really giving me a hard time,' the father-in-law said. Finally it was the turn of the third daughter-in-law to offer a cup of wine. She stepped forward and said, 'Sir, you're not really like a magistrate or like a lictor.' 'Then what am I like?' the father-in-law demanded to know. 'Sir,' said the daughter-in-law, 'you're just like a head yamen clerk.' 'How am I like a head yamen clerk?' the father-in-law asked. 'If you're not like a head yamen clerk,' the daughter-in-law replied, 'how is it that you have the run of all six chambers?' "[52]

Everyone laughed at this joke.

"You bald-pated rascal!" said Chin-lien. "You've managed to get us all into it. What sort of a yamen clerk would have the nerve to venture into every chamber? The bald-pated dog would be lucky to escape with his nether regions in one piece."

After this exchange, Chin-lien, Yü-lou, and Li P'ing-erh went off to the front gate together to look for Hsi-men Ch'ing, but he was nowhere to be seen.

“What’s Father doing away from home on such a snowy day?” asked Yü-lou. “I wonder where he’s gone.”

“If you ask me,” said Chin-lien, “he’s sure to be at that whore Li Kuei-chieh’s house in the quarter.”

“But he smashed the place up he was so upset with her,” said Yü-lou. “He swore an oath never to set foot in it again. Why should he go back there? Let’s make a bet on it. I’m sure he’s not at her place.”

“Sister Li can be our witness,” said Chin-lien. “Are you willing to shake on it? I say he’s gone to her house today. It was day before yesterday that he trashed the whore’s place. Yesterday that cuckold Li Ming came here to size up the situation. Today Ying the Second and that Hsieh fellow showed up at the crack of dawn, like ghost-snatching demons, and dragged him off with them. My guess is that the old procuress and that whore have:

Laid plans and hatched a scheme,[53]

in order to get him back there again. If they’re able to work their wiles on him, somehow or other, and succeed in propitiating him, they’ll have a chance to:

Relight the furnace and restore the account.

Who knows how long he’ll be tied up, or what the probabilities are as to whether he’ll come home or not; but our elder sister just keeps waiting for him.”

“Even if he doesn’t come home,” said Yü-lou, “he ought to send a page boy back to let us know about it.”

As they were talking, who should come by but a vendor of melon seeds, so the two of them, standing in the gateway, bought some melon seeds and stood there cracking them in their teeth. All of a sudden, they caught sight of Hsi-men Ch’ing coming toward them from the east, and the three ladies beat a hasty retreat.

Hsi-men Ch’ing, who was on horseback, sent Tai-an ahead of him on foot, saying, “See who it is standing there in the gateway.”

Tai-an ran forward a step or two and reported, “It’s the Third Lady, the Fifth Lady, and the Sixth Lady, buying melon seeds at the gate.”

In due course, Hsi-men Ch’ing arrived home, dismounted, and walked back through the inner gate that led to the rear compound. Meng Yü-lou and Li P’ing-erh had gone ahead to the master suite to tell Yüeh-niang of his arrival, but Chin-lien lay in wait for him, concealing herself in the black shadow behind the whitewashed spirit screen.

When he encountered her, Hsi-men Ch’ing was startled and said, “You crazy little whore! Coming upon you so suddenly gave me quite a start. What were you all doing out at the front gate?”

“You have a nerve to ask,” said Chin-lien. “Where have you been all this time, that you should only be coming home now, leaving your mothers with nothing to do but wait for you at the door?”

After some time, Hsi-men Ch’ing arrived in the master suite. Yüeh-niang had prepared a feast for the occasion which was laid out on the table with everything:

Straight and proper.[54]

She told Yü-hsiao to hold the flagon and Hsi-men Ta-chieh to serve the wine. Hsi-men Ch’ing was served first, after which, when all of the sisters had been served in turn, they sat down at their places. Ch’un-mei and Ying-ch’un played and sang for them in the lower part of the room.

After they had eaten for a while, the first course was cleared away and the sweetmeats in honor of Meng Yü-lou’s birthday were served, consisting of forty saucersful of delicacies of every kind.

The finest vintage poured from the flagon,[55]
Iridescent liquid overflowed the cups.

Yüeh-niang’s sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K’ai, was induced to occupy the seat of honor but retired to her room during the first watch because she did not like to drink too much wine. Wu Yüeh-niang and the sorority of concubines, however, continued to keep Hsi-men Ch’ing company, throwing dice:

Playing at guess-fingers or gaming at forfeits.

When it was Yüeh-niang’s turn to call the game, she said, “If you want me to set the rules for this round, the scoring will be based on domino combinations. Each player in turn must come up with the

name of a song tune, the names of two domino combinations, and a line from the *Hsi-hsiang chi* (The romance of the western chamber),[56] strung together so as to make some semblance of sense. He or she must then throw the dice and drink a cup of wine as a forfeit if any of the numbers thrown correspond to those in the domino combinations he or she has named."

Yüeh-niang went first, saying, " 'The Sixth Lady,' like a 'Drunken Yang Kuei-fei,'[57] drops her 'Eight-pearled Bracelet.'[58] 'Gossamer strands catch on the rose-leaved raspberry trellis.' "[59]

When she threw the dice, none of the numbers corresponded to those in either of the domino combinations she had named.

Next it was Hsi-men Ch'ing's turn. He said, " 'The Beautiful Lady Yü,' observing 'Ch'u and Han Contend for Supremacy,'[60] feels threatened by 'The Regular Cavalry.'[61] 'Beside my ears gongs and drums resound to the skies.' "[62]

Sure enough, when he threw the dice he got the combination called "The Regular Cavalry" and had to drink a cup of wine as a penalty.

Li Chiao-erh came next. She said, " 'The Water Nymphs,' because 'Two Gentlemen Intrude upon Peach Blossom Spring,'[63] are startled out of their idyll in which 'Flowers Blossom and Butterflies Fill the Branches,'[64] As a result, 'Fallen red petals cover the ground, their rouge now cold.' "[65]

When she threw the dice, she escaped unscathed.

Then came Chin-lien, who said, " 'The Old Crone' 'Ventures among the Flowers in Her Dotage,'[66] thereby flouting 'The Three Bonds and Five Constants,'[67] 'If not arrested for seduction, it will be for robbery.' "[68]

Sure enough, when she threw the dice she got the combination called "The Three Bonds and Five Constants" and had to drink a cup of wine as a penalty.

Next it was Li P'ing-erh's turn. She said, " 'Decorous and Pretty,' she 'Mounts a Ladder to Gaze at the Moon,'[69] waiting until 'The Spring Equinox, when Day and Night are Equal in Length.'[70] At that

time, ‘Separated from him by the intervening wall, she might have turned to stone awaiting her husband.’ ”[71]

When she threw the dice, she escaped unscathed.

Then came Sun Hsüeh-o, who said, “ ‘The Pockmarked Young Man,’ on seeing ‘The Flock of Crows Attack the Phoenix,’[72] only succeeds in tripping up ‘The Wild Goose with the Broken Leg.’[73] ‘I’ll be damned if I do and damned if I don’t.’ ”[74]

When she threw the dice, she escaped unscathed.

Finally, it was the turn of Yü-lou to finish the round. She said, “ ‘Nien-nu Is Charming.’ Propping up the drunken ‘Red Doublet Four,’[75] she trails ‘The Hem of Her Brocaded Skirt.’[76] How often will she enjoy ‘Spring breezes and moonlit nights amid gold lame bed curtains.’ ”[77]

Sure enough, when she threw the dice she got the combination called “Red Doublet Four.”

Yüeh-niang completed her round as mistress of ceremonies by saying to Hsiao-yü, “Pour some wine for the Third Lady.”

Turning to the latter, she continued, “You’d better drink three large cups. This evening it’s your turn to spend the night with the bridegroom.”

Addressing herself then to Chin-lien, Li Chiao-erh, and the rest, she said, “As soon as she’s finished her wine, we must all see the two of them to their bridal chamber.”

“If that is Elder Sister’s decree,” said Chin-lien, “how could we dare not to comply?”

This badinage reduced Yü-lou to a state of utter confusion.

Not long thereafter, the wine was finished and Yüeh-niang and the others escorted Hsi-men Ch’ing as far as the door of Yü-lou’s chamber before going their separate ways. Yü-lou invited them to come in and visit for a while, but none of them would stay.

“My child,” teased Chin-lien, “see that the two of you get a good night’s rest. Your mother will come back to see you in the morning. Don’t be naughty now.”

Then, turning to Yüeh-niang, she continued in the same vein, “Kinswoman, my child is still a youngster. For my sake, if anything comes up, give her the benefit of the doubt.”

“Slavey Six,” said Yü-lou:

“The best vinegar takes time to ferment.
I’ll have something to say to you tomorrow.”

“As for me,” said Chin-lien, “I’m like:

The go-between who has to climb the stairs:
Quite inured to such alarms.”

“My child,” said Yü-lou. “Won’t you stay a little longer?”

“We’re only outsiders, after all,” said Chin-lien, “from the other side of the wall.”

Thereupon, along with Li P’ing-erh and Hsi-men Ta-chieh she set out to return to the front compound. Just as they reached the inner gate, Li P’ing-erh lost her footing on a slippery patch of ground and fell down.

Chin-lien made a big to-do about it, calling out, “Sister Li, you might as well be blind. With every move you make you come a cropper. When I tried to catch you, one of my own feet slipped into the snow and now my shoe is all muddy.”

Yüeh-niang overheard this, and said, “It must be that pile of snow by the inner gate. I’ve told the page boys to take care of it more than once, but the lousy slaves simply won’t cart it away. It’s no wonder someone has taken a spill.”

Then, turning to Hsiao-yü, she said, “Take a lantern and escort the Fifth Lady and the Sixth Lady back to the front compound.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing, in Yü-lou’s room, said to her, “Just take a gander at that lousy little whore. She steps in the mud, trips someone up, and then has the nerve to suggest that the other party has gotten mud on her shoe. She invariably picks on someone who’s unlikely to give her any lip in return. It’s just like her, little whore that she is. I’m sure it was she, yesterday, that put the maidservants up to singing:

It was the night of their assignation.”

“What was the point of that particular song suite?” asked Yü-lou.

“What she meant to suggest,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “is that my wife’s encounter with me was not really just a coincidence, but something done by design; as though she was burning incense at night in the expectation that I would discover her in the act.”

“Sister Six seems to know every song in the repertory,” said Yü-lou. “The rest of us don’t understand such things.”

“You don’t know what that whore is capable of,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “All she ever does is engage in backbiting at other people’s expense.”

We will say no more, for the moment, about how Hsi-men Ch’ing spent the night in Yü-lou’s room, but turn instead to P’an Chin-lien and Li P’ing-erh.

The two of them chatted as they walked along, Chin-lien addressing her companion sometimes as Sister Li and sometimes as Sister Hua. They accompanied Hsi-men Ta-chieh as far as the inner gate that led into the front courtyard, where she returned to her quarters. Hsiao-yü, holding a lantern, then escorted the two of them into the garden.

Chin-lien was already half drunk. Taking Li P’ing-erh by the hand, she said, “Sister Hua, I’m a little tipsy today. Be good enough, whatever happens, to accompany me into my room.”

“You’re not drunk, Sister,” said Li P’ing-erh.

Before long, they arrived at Chin-lien’s quarters, and Hsiao-yü was sent back to the rear compound. Chin-lien invited Li P’ing-erh to sit down and have some tea.

“You were talking just now,” said Chin-lien, “about that time when you were unable to enter the household. Who do you suppose you have to thank for the present situation? Who would ever have thought that today we’d be sisters:

Walking along the same gangplank?[78]

I don’t know how much unpleasantness I had to put up with on your account, or all the things that were said about me behind my back. As for my good intentions, they are known only to Heaven. That’s all there is to it.”

“I know how much trouble you went to,” said Li P’ing-erh.

“Your kindness will be amply rewarded,
I will never dare to forget it.”

“As long as you’re aware of it,” said Chin-lien, “we can be on talking terms with each other.”

In a little while, Ch’un-mei served the tea and, after finishing it, Li P’ing-erh took her leave and went back to her own quarters, while Chin-lien went to sleep by herself. But no more of this. Truly:

Just as it seems that, first to last,
there is nothing to regret;
No sooner are the branches formed than
they begin to proliferate.[79]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 22

HSI-MEN CH'ING SECRETLY SEDUCES LAI-WANG'S WIFE; CH'UN-MEI SELF-RIGHTEOUSLY DENOUNCES LI MING

If you're clever, you'll be considered labored,
  if you're awkward, idle;[1]
If you're good, you'll be disdained as weak,
  if you're bad, callous.
If you're rich, you'll meet with envy,
  if you're poor, disgrace;[2]
If you're diligent, you'll be thought grasping,
  if you're economical, stingy.
If you deal with things consistently,
  you'll be scorned as simple;
If you adapt yourself to circumstances,[3]
  you'll be suspected of deceit.
If you think about it, it is hardly possible
  to satisfy anyone;[4]
The role of human being is an arduous one,
  to be a man is hard.[5]

THE STORY GOES that the next day Yüeh-niang's sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K'ai, Aunt Yang, Old Mrs. P'an, and other female guests had all assembled to celebrate Meng Yü-lou's birthday. Yüeh-niang presided over the party, which took place in the reception room in

the rear compound. This would all have been well enough had it not given rise to a certain incident.

Because Lai-wang's wife had finally died of consumption, Yüeh-niang had recently found a new wife for him. Her maiden name was Sung and she was the daughter of the coffin seller, Sung Jen. She had originally been a maidservant in the household of Assistant Prefect Ts'ai but had lost her position there because of a scandal, and then married a cook named Chiang Ts'ung, or Sauce and Scallions. This Chiang Ts'ung was often hired for temporary duty in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, and Lai-wang, who was sent to his home to fetch him, early and late, thus became acquainted with his wife. The two of them sometimes drank wine together and bandied words, with the result that Lai-wang succeeded in seducing her.

One day, unexpectedly, Chiang Ts'ung got into a quarrel with his fellow kitchen workers over the division of their pay. This turned into a drunken brawl in the course of which knives were drawn and Chiang Ts'ung was stabbed to death. His assailant succeeded in scaling the wall and making good his escape. His widow begged Lai-wang to intercede with Hsi-men Ch'ing, who sent a note to the vice magistrate of the district, with the result that the offender was apprehended, convicted of a capital crime, and executed in atonement for the death of Chiang Ts'ung.

Later on, Lai-wang deceived Yüeh-niang into believing that the widow had been the wife of a small householder and was good at needlework, and he persuaded her to lay out five taels of silver, two suits of clothes, four bolts of blue and of red fabric, and a few hairpins, bracelets, and the like, in order to acquire her as a new wife for him. Because her given name was Chin-lien, Yüeh-niang thought it would be awkward to have two people of the same name in the household and had her change her name to Hui-lien.

This woman was born in the year of the horse and was two years younger than Chin-lien, which made her twenty-five years old that year.[6] She possessed:

A clear off-white complexion.

Her figure was neither plump nor thin;

Her stature was neither short nor tall.
Her bound feet were even smaller than Chin-lien's. She was:
Clever by nature,
Highly adaptable,
Adept at adorning herself,
As able at making waves as a dragon or tiger;
In fact:
A champion among seductresses,
A leader of the homebreakers.
If one were to summarize her accomplishments, she was able to:

Stand leaning idly against the doorjamb,[7]
Following each passerby with her eyes;
Lean cheek on hand or bite her nails,
Adjusting her attire for no good reason;
Sitting or standing, swing her legs,
Singing to herself in a husky voice;
Open windows and thrust apart shutters,
With needle poised, losing herself in thought;[8]
Smile expectantly before speaking,
Betraying the fact she is having an affair.[9]

When she first arrived, she took her part in the kitchen work along with the other servants' wives and made no effort to doll herself up, or even think about doing so. Later on, after she had been there a month or more, she began to notice the way in which Yü-lou, Chin-lien, and the others were tricked out, and responded accordingly. She built up the chignon under her fret until it became higher and higher, affected a bouffant hairdo, and adorned her temples with two long spit curls. As a result, when she:

Served tea or served water,[10]

to her employers, she began to catch Hsi-men Ch'ing's eye.

One day he formulated a plan according to which he would send Lai-wang to Hang-chou with five hundred taels of silver in order to arrange the manufacture of brocaded python robes for presentation

to Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching on the occasion of his birthday, as well as the purchase of clothing for all four seasons to supply the future needs of his own household. The round trip ought to take as much as half a year. His departure was arranged for around the middle of the eleventh month, and he accordingly set out at that time to travel by cart on the overland route. Hsi-men Ch'ing was determined that sooner or later he would have a chance to make a play for his wife.

It was now the day of Meng Yü-lou's birthday, and Yüeh-niang was entertaining the female guests in the reception room in the rear compound. Hsi-men Ch'ing happened to be at home, not having any outside engagements that day.

"Set up a separate table for him in the master suite," Yüeh-niang instructed Yü-hsiao, "and see that he is served a full complement of wine and food, including soup, rice, and savories."

Through the hanging blind Hsi-men Ching observed Sung Hui-lien serving wine to the guests at the party, wearing a red crepe jacket that opened down the middle over a skirt of violet silk.

Feigning ignorance, he asked Yü-hsiao, "Who is that in the red jacket?"

"It's Lai-wang's new wife, Hui-lien," replied Yü-hsiao.

"Why on earth is she wearing a violet skirt with a red jacket?" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "It's most unbecoming. Tell your mistress in the future to find her a skirt of some other color that will match better."[11]

"That violet skirt is one she borrowed from me," said Yü-hsiao.

This reply put a stop to the matter for the time being and, before long, Meng Yü-lou's birthday was over.

One day, Yüeh-niang paid a visit to the home of Ch'iao Hung, a well-to-do commoner who lived across the street from them, in order to celebrate a birthday. That afternoon, Hsi-men Ch'ing happened to come home somewhat tipsy. He arrived at the inner gate just as Hui-lien was on her way out, and the two of them ran smack into each other.

Hsi-men Ch'ing impulsively reached out with one hand, embraced her by the neck, and gave her a kiss, murmuring as he did so, "My child, if you'll allow me to have my way with you, you can have anything in the way of jewelry or clothing that you wish."

The woman said not a word, pushed aside Hsi-men Ch'ing's hand, and continued on her way to the front compound.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing arrived in the master suite he told Yü-hsiao to deliver a bolt of blue silk to Hui-lien's room and, thus and so, to say to her, "The other day Father saw you serving wine at the party wearing a violet skirt along with a red jacket, a combination that was most unbecoming and really didn't do you justice. I told him that the violet skirt was one you had borrowed from me. He opened up the clothes cabinet, just now, and took out this bolt of silk which he sent me to give you in order to make into a skirt."

Hui-lien opened it up and saw that it was a bolt of turquoise blue silk, figured with roundels of flowers from each of the four seasons and pairs of magpies face-to-face, a rebus for the words "happy reunion."

"If I make this up," said Hui-lien, "Mother is bound to notice it and ask where it came from. What then?"

"Father will tell Mother what he's done," said Yü-hsiao. "You have nothing to worry about. Father also said that if you go along with him in this matter he'll buy you whatever you want. He'd like to have a tryst with you today while Mother's not at home. What do you think?"

On hearing this proposition the woman smiled slightly but did not immediately say anything.

"When does Father plan to come?" she finally asked. "Shall I wait for him here?"

"Father says it would be awkward if he were seen going into your room by the page boys," said Yü-hsiao. "He wants you to slip secretly into the grotto under the artificial hill in the garden. There's never anybody there so it's a suitable place for a tryst."

"I fear the Fifth Lady or the Sixth Lady might get wind of it," the woman said. "That would be embarrassing."

“The Third Lady and the Fifth Lady are playing a board game in the Sixth Lady’s quarters right now,” said Yü-hsiao. “You can go ahead. The coast is clear.”

Now that the arrangements were complete, Yü-hsiao went back to report to Hsi-men Ch’ing. The two principals then proceeded to the grotto where they consummated their affair while Yü-hsiao stood at the garden gate to act as a lookout.

It so happened that Chin-lien and Yü-lou were playing a board game in Li P’ing-erh’s quarters when who should appear but Hsiao-luan, who had come to fetch Yü-lou, saying, “Father has come home.”

The party then broke up and Yü-lou returned to the rear compound. Chin-lien went to her own quarters and made up her face, after which she also set out for the rear compound. As she came through the inner gate, she encountered Hsiao-yü standing outside the door of the master suite.

“Is your father inside?” she asked.

Hsiao-yü made a negative gesture with her hand and pointed toward the front compound. Chin-lien understood at once and made her way back toward the postern gate that led into the garden where the artificial hill was located. There she found Yü-hsiao barring her way. Suspecting that it was she who had been dallying there with Hsi-men Ch’ing, she tried to force her way through, which reduced Yü-hsiao to panic.

“Fifth Lady, you can’t go in there,” she said. “Father’s in there and he’s busy.”

“You crazy little bitch!” exclaimed Chin-lien. “As if I were afraid of your father!”

Whereupon:

Without permitting any further explanation,

she marched into the garden and proceeded to search it from one end to the other. When she reached the grotto under the artificial hill, which had been given the name Hidden Spring Grotto,[12] the couple within had just brought their transaction to a conclusion. The woman, hearing someone coming, had just managed to refasten

her skirt and start outside when she ran into Chin-lien and turned crimson with embarrassment.

“You lousy little stinker! What do you think you’re doing here?” Chin-lien demanded.

“I came to look for Hua-t’ung,” the woman replied and then, under her interlocutor’s gaze, disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Chin-lien went inside where she found Hsi-men Ch’ing in the act of fastening up his trousers.

“You lousy shameless good-for-nothing!” she railed at him. “You’ve been up to your tricks in here with that slave of a whore in broad daylight. I should’ve boxed that whore’s ears for her, but she managed to get away. So you’re the Hua-t’ung she was looking for, are you. Tell me the truth. How many times have you made out with that whore? If you don’t level with me, just wait till Elder Sister gets home in a little while and see if I don’t tell her all about it. If I don’t beat that slave of a whore’s face till she looks like a bloated pig, I might as well quit. Here we all are, bored enough to scream as it is, and she comes along and wants to horn in on the action. Well I’m not the one to let her get away with it.”

“You crazy little whore!” laughed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “Keep your voice down. Do you want everyone to know about it? I’ll tell you the truth. Thus and so, today included, I’ve only made out with her once.”



Hsi-men Ch'ing Secretly Seduces Lai-wang's Wife

"Once? Twice? I don't believe you," said Chin-lien. "But if you think you can continue to carry on your tricks with that slave of a

whore while:

Deceiving spirits and stupefying demons,[13]

you've got another think coming. If I ever find out about it, then forgive you me, but I'll have something to say to the two of you."

Hsi-men Ch'ing laughed and made his exit.

When Chin-lien returned to the rear compound she overheard the gossiping maidservants saying, "When Father came home today he sent Yü-hsiao to the front of the compound with a bolt of blue silk wrapped up in a kerchief, but we don't know whom it was intended for."

Chin-lien realized that it had been a present for Lai-wang's wife, but she kept the information to herself, not even mentioning it to Meng Yü-lou.

Hui-lien, for her part, endeavored every day to get on the right side of Chin-lien by cooking special treats for her, offering to help with her needlework, or playing up to her in disingenuous ways while she was engaged in board games with Li P'ing-erh. Chin-lien, too, when there was no one else about, would facilitate Hui-lien's liaisons with Hsi-men Ch'ing as a means of further ingratiating herself with her husband.

From the commencement of Hui-lien's affair with Hsi-men Ch'ing, quite aside from the clothing, handkerchiefs, jewelry, breath-sweetening lozenges, and the like, with which he kept her supplied on the sly, she was observed to have ready money by the tael at her disposal, with which she bought ornamental trinkets and cosmetics at the front gate of the compound. Gradually it became apparent that she was no longer dressing the way she used to do. Hsi-men Ch'ing also spoke to Yüeh-niang about her, suggesting that since she made such good soup she ought to be relieved of her duties in the main kitchen and assigned to share the responsibility with Yü-hsiao for looking after the small stove behind the master suite, boiling tea water and supplying snacks for Yüeh-niang's consumption, and helping her with her needlework, but there is no need to describe this in detail.

Gentle reader take note: The head of a household ought never to engage in compromising intimacies with the wives of his slaves or servants. Sooner or later such conduct:

Confuses the distinction between high and low,
Opens the door to surreptitious abuses, and
Poses a threat to public morality,

until the situation gets out of hand. There is a poem that testifies to this:

Since Hsi-men Ch'ing, in his lust, ignores
distinctions of status;
It is inevitable that his concubines
will compete for his favor.
How can he bear to treat Yüeh-niang as though
she does not exist;
While disrupting the bonds of society by
seducing his servant's wife?

One day, on the eighth day of the twelfth month, Hsi-men Ch'ing got up earlier than usual, having prearranged with Ying Po-chüeh to go together to attend the funeral procession of the wife of Prefectural Judge Shang, who lived on Main Street. He told the page boys to prepare two horses and was waiting for Ying Po-chüeh, who had not yet arrived, when Li Ming appeared in order to give another lesson to Ch'un-mei and the other three household musicians. Hsi-men Ch'ing was sitting by the stove in the main reception room at the time, and he ordered that Ch'un-mei, Yü-hsiao, Lan-hsiang, and Ying-ch'un, all four of them, should get dressed up and come out front so he could look on as Li Ming gave them their lesson. His son-in-law, Ch'en Ching-chi, was also there to keep him company.

They embarked on the song suite the first number of which, to the tune "Powdery Butterflies," begins with the words:

"Three Variations on the Plum Blossom,"[14]

and had not yet finished it when Ying Po-chüeh came in the door, accompanied by his eldest son, Ying Pao, carrying his father's felt bag.

Ch'un-mei and her three companions started to return to the rear compound, but Hsi-men Ch'ing called them to a halt, saying, "After all, it's only old Ying the Second. Come pay him your respects, why don't you. There's no need to hide."

He and Po-chüeh saluted each other with a bow and were about to sit down when he ordered the four of them, "Come over here and kowtow to old Ying the Second."

Ch'un-mei and the others turned to face the guest and kowtowed to him before withdrawing a few steps.

Ying Po-chüeh hurriedly bowed to each of them in turn and complimented his host, saying, "You have all the luck, Brother. What fine young ladies the four of them have all turned out to be.

Like bulrushes, each one is prettier than the last.

I'm afraid I'm somewhat at a loss, though, having come out today empty-handed. I found myself so:

Pushed and pressured,

this morning that I neglected to bring anything along with me. I'll have to give them a little something for rouge and powder on another day."

Shortly thereafter, Ch'un-mei and the others, haying paid their respects, went inside, and Ch'en Ching-chi bowed to the visitor and sat down.

"What kept you so long today?" asked Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"I don't even like to talk about it," said Ying Po-chüeh. "My eldest daughter has been sick for some time and has only recently begun to get better. My wife is concerned about her and has invited her to come home and relax for a few days. I've been tied up until now arranging with Ying Pao to engage a sedan chair for her and buying a few things for her visit. I'm a bit late I'm afraid."

"I've been waiting for you," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Let's have some congee and be on our way."

“Go fetch some congee from the rear compound for us to eat,” he then instructed a page boy.

When Li Ming saw Ying Po-chüeh he came up and greeted him by falling to one knee.

“I haven’t seen you for some time, Li Ming,” said Po-chüeh.

“Well, here I am,” said Li Ming. “I’ve been working at Eunuch Director Hsü’s place in the Northern Quarter the last couple of days and only just came over here.”

As they spoke, two page boys set up a table and fetched the congee for them to eat. There were four salty main courses and ten side dishes. The main courses had been slow boiled and consisted of a bowl of ham hocks, a bowl of squab, a bowl of steamed junket flavored with potherb mustard greens, and a bowl of chicken wonton. These served to accompany three silver-mounted bowls of congee made from nonglutinous rice, which had been cooked with hazelnuts, pine seeds, chestnuts, fruit kernels, rose hips, and crystallized sugar.

Hsi-men Ch’ing joined Ying Po-chüeh and Ch’en Ching-chi in consuming this repast and then called for small silver cups and filled them with Chin-hua wine. When they had each had three cups there was still more than half a flagon of wine left over and Hsi-men Ch’ing told Hua-t’ung to take it, along with the table that contained the remainder of their breakfast, into an antechamber and offer it to Li Ming.

He then put on his outdoor clothes and set off with Ying Po-chüeh to join the funeral procession for the wife of Prefectural Judge Shang, leaving Li Ming to consume the leftovers in the anteroom on the western side of the front courtyard.

No sooner had Yüeh-niang’s maidservant, Yü-hsiao, together with Lan-hsiang and the others, seen Hsi-men Ch’ing out the door than they began:

Horsing around till they were all in a heap,

in the side chamber in which they were awaiting their lesson. After a while they trooped across to Hsi-men Ta-chieh’s room on the other side of the courtyard and continued their horseplay there. Ch’un-mei

alone remained where she was, and Li Ming proceeded to give her a lesson on the *p'i-p'a*.

Li Ming had had something to drink. Ch'un-mei's sleeve opening was wide and her hand became caught in it. When Li Ming reached over to help extricate her hand he pressed it more heavily than necessary. Ch'un-mei was immediately incensed and began to tell him off in no uncertain terms.

"You lousy cuckold!" she railed at him. "What do you think you're doing squeezing my hand and making a pass at me? You lousy dead duck of a cuckold! You don't know who it is you're messing around with. Here you are being plied with:

The best wine and the finest meat,[15]

and it only brings out more clearly the fact that you have the soul of a cuckold. Squeeze my hand, will you? You lousy cuckold!

You've stuck your spade in the wrong place,

this time. Ask around and you'll soon find out if I'm the sort of person to play your tricks on. Just wait till he gets home and I tell him about it. You lousy cuckold! You'll be:

Driven away from this door for good,[16]

with the aid of a stick. I suppose you think that without your cuckold's services we couldn't learn how to sing. As though there weren't another cuckold to be had in the licensed quarter! Well the muck's on you, you cuckold!"

Calling him a cuckold a thousand times, if not ten thousand times, Ch'un-mei railed at him until Li Ming picked up his things and fled, as though:

Whether his fate were governed by metal or by water,
There was no place for him to hide.[17]

Truly:

With two hands he tore open the road
between life and death;
Flopping over and leaping out through
the gate to perdition.[18]

Li Ming fled in consternation, and Ch'un-mei headed back toward the interior of the compound in a rage, cursing as she went. Chin-lien was in her room playing a board game with Meng Yü-lou, Li P'ing-erh, and Sung Hui-lien when she heard Ch'un-mei come in, uttering imprecations as she came.

"Who are you railing at, you lousy little piece?" asked Chin-lien. "Who's been bothering you?"

"You know perfectly well who it is," Ch'un-mei said angrily. "It's not to be borne. When Father was about to leave he told a page boy, out of the kindness of his heart, to take what was left of the dishes on the breakfast table and the remainder of the congee and offer them to that cuckold Li Ming. Yü-hsiao and the others were also there:

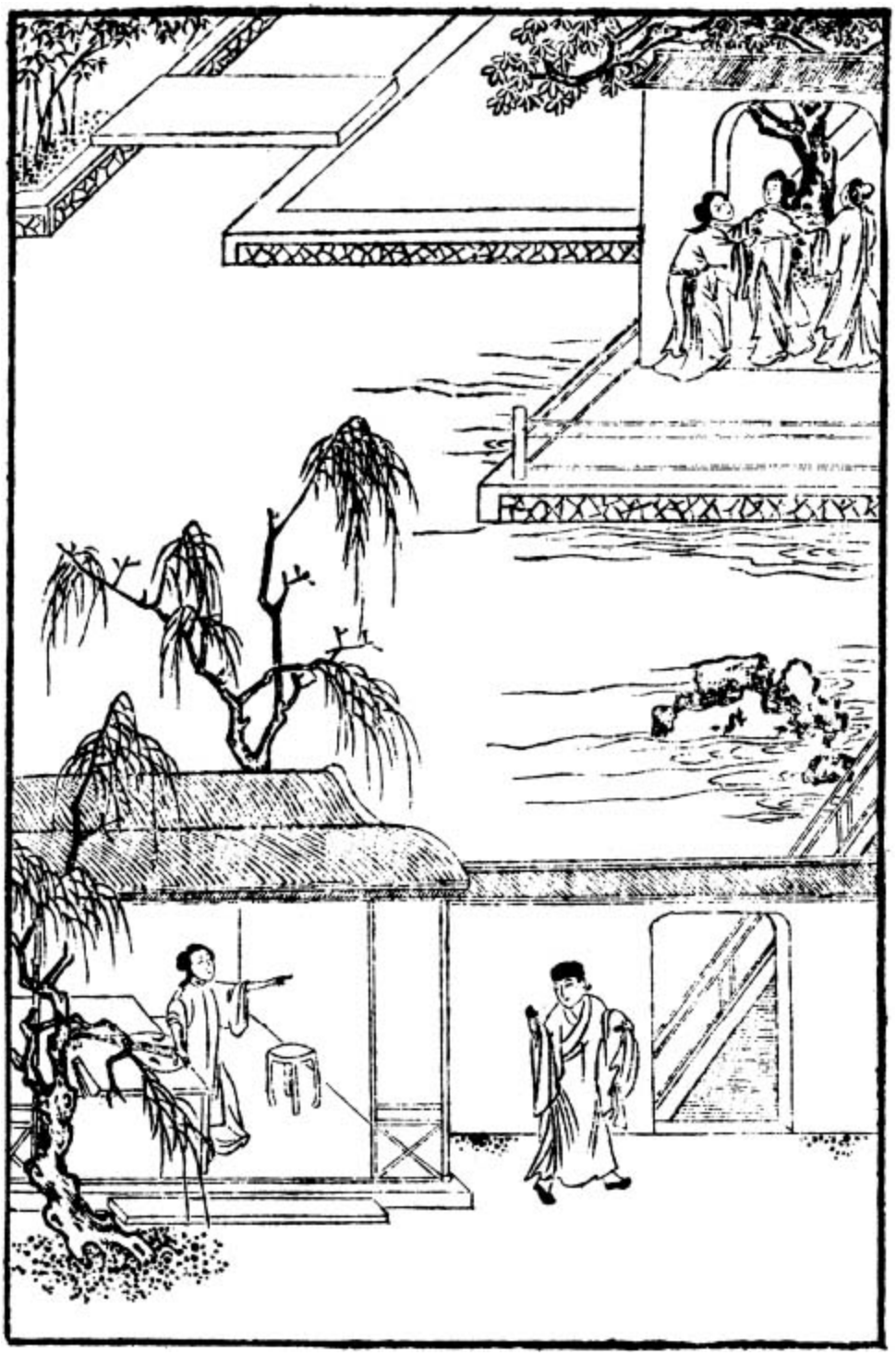
Horsing around till they were all in a heap.

It was a case of:

You push me,
I push you,

and:

Showing their teeth and making faces,[19]



Ch’un-mei Self-righteously Denounces Li Ming

at that cuckold as though they’d lost all sense of decorum. After clowning around for a bit, they all trooped off to Hsi-men Ta-chieh’s room on the other side of the courtyard.

“No sooner did that cuckold see there was nobody about than he gave my hand a squeeze, as hard as he could, gazing at me with a drunken simper. As though I’d let him get away with something like that! When he saw me raise a hue and cry and start to give him what for, he snatched up his things and ran for it. I should’ve boxed that cuckold’s ears for him. The lousy cuckold! You’d better learn to:

Suit your conduct to the person you’re dealing with.

I’m not the sort of wanton baggage who is:

Neither fish nor fowl,[20]

that would be likely to put up with the tricks of a cuckold like you. I’ll beat your cuckold’s face until it’s black and blue.”

“You crazy little piece,” said Chin-lien. “What does it matter whether you continue your lessons or not? You’ve gotten so angry your face is all sallow. Just wait till your father comes home and tell him about it. He’ll give the lousy cuckold his walking papers and that will be the end of it. Who does he think he is, anyway? He’s only a paid entertainer, after all. Does that give the cuckold the right to make a pass at my maid? I know all about that lousy cuckold.

His crock of bad karma is already full.”[21]

“It’s just his bad luck,” said Ch’un-mei. “No doubt he’s relying on the fact that he’s the Second Lady’s brother. But who’s afraid of the Second Lady? I suppose he thinks if she has it in for me she can just order me five strokes with the cane, or something like that.”

“If you stop to think about it,” chimed in Sung Hui-lien, “he’s only a musician who’s been hired to come here and teach his stock in trade. What business does he have making a pass at a girl of good family?

For every coin you receive from your patron,

You should be as grateful as to your parents.

Not to mention the fact that every day you’re regaled with:

Three teas and six repasts.”

“And on top of all that,” said Chin-lien, “he demands his wages before he leaves. He’s being paid at the rate of five taels of silver per month. You lousy cuckold!

You’re sacrificing at the wrong grave.[22]

Just ask around among the page boys in the household and see if any of them have the nerve to show their teeth and grin at Ch’un-mei, or give her any lip. If they caught her in a good mood, they might get off with a curse or two. But if they caught her in a bad mood, she’d have them dragged in front of the master and given a beating for their pains. In fact, if it comes to that, she’s quite capable of brazening it out with the master himself. You really picked the wrong person this time. You lousy cuckold! You’ve run out of luck. You may have gotten her ginger up, but you don’t even know how hot she can make it for you yet.”

“And what were you up to?” she continued, turning to Ch’un-mei. “When Father left, you could have come inside and nothing would have happened. What on earth did you stay in that side room with him for, and give that cuckold the opportunity to make a pass at you?”

“It was all because Yü-hsiao and the others were only interested in horsing around:

Falling into a heap with laughter,

and didn’t want to come in,” said Ch’un-mei.

“You mean to say the three of them are still in the side chamber out there?” asked Yü-lou.

“They’ve all gone over to Hsi-men Ta-chieh’s room on the other side of the courtyard,” said Ch’un-mei.

“I’ll go see what’s going on,” said Yü-lou, getting up and suiting her action to her words.

Sometime later, Li P’ing-erh also returned to her quarters and sent Hsiu-ch’un out to summon Ying-ch’un.

That evening, when Hsi-men Ch’ing came home, Chin-lien gave him a word for word account of the incident, with the result that he ordered Lai-hsing not to let Li Ming into the house in the future. Now that access was denied him, he didn’t dare come around any more. As far as Li Ming was concerned, truly:

Though his deeds were done in the past,

The chickens would come home to roost.

There is a poem that testifies to this:

By hiring a tutor to teach his maids to sing,
he flaunted his munificence;
Every day, in the deserted courtyard,
they fiddled with their sound boxes.
Who would have thought that Li Ming
would be driven from his post;
Thereby raising Ch'un-mei's reputation
as high as the skies?

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 23

YÜ-HSIAO ACTS AS LOOKOUT BY YÜEH-NIANG'S CHAMBER; CHIN-LIEN EAVESDROPS OUTSIDE HIDDEN SPRING GROTTO

THERE IS a lyric to the tune "Moon on the West River" that goes:

In conduct, heedless of Heaven's principles;
His actions disregard established norms.
Doing just as he pleases, he is ever ready to deceive;
Relying on clout, he scorns others and reveres himself.

He goes out in embroidered robes on a fine steed;
He returns to enjoy the damsels of Wu and Yüeh.
But gold and jade do not furnish a secure foundation;
Even they are not immune to the vicissitudes of fortune.

The story goes that:

The twelfth month ended and spring began,
It was the festival of the New Year.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was out paying courtesy calls and Wu Yüeh-niang was away on a visit to the home of her elder brother, Wu K'ai. That noon Meng Yü-lou and P'an Chin-lien were in Li P'ing-erh's rooms playing a board game with her.

"What should we bet on the outcome today?" asked Yü-lou.

"Let's play three games," said Chin-lien, "and make the loser fork out five mace of silver and stand us all a treat. We can spend three mace on Chin-hua wine, the other two on a pig's head, and get Lai-

wang's wife to braise it for us. They say she really knows how to braise a pig's head and can do it to a turn with a single stick of firewood."

"Our elder sister is not at home," Yü-lou pointed out. "What should we do about that?"

"We can always save a portion for her," said Chin-lien, "and have it sent to her room. It's all the same thing."

When they had finished talking about it the trio set out their pieces and proceeded to play three games. Li P'ing-erh was the loser and forfeited five mace of silver. Chin-lien sent Li P'ing-erh's maid, Hsiu-ch'un, to summon Lai-hsing and turned the money over to him, telling him to buy a jug of Chin-hua wine and a pig's head along with four trotters.

"Take them to the kitchen in the rear compound," Chin-lien instructed him, "and get Lai-wang's wife, Hui-lien, to braise them immediately. Then have her deliver them to the Third Lady's room and wait for us there. We'll be over in a jiffy."

"Sister Six," said Yü-lou, "it would be better to have her put them in a box when she's done and bring them back here for us to eat. If we move to the rear compound Li Chiao-erh and Sun Hsüeh-o will see what's going on and we'll have to worry about whether or not to invite them to partake."

Chin-lien acceded to Yü-lou's suggestion.

It wasn't long before Lai-hsing came back to deliver the wine and pig's head he had purchased to the kitchen. Hui-lien was in the rear compound just then, sitting with Yü-hsiao on the stone stylobate outside the master suite, playing jacks.

"Sister Hui-lien," Lai-hsing said to her, "the Fifth Lady and the Third Lady have a request to make of you. They sent me out to buy some wine and a pig's head, along with the trotters, all of which are now sitting in the kitchen. They'd like you to braise them till they're properly done and then deliver them to the Sixth Lady's quarters in the front compound."

"I don't have the time," replied Hui-lien. "I'm busy stitching shoe soles for the mistress. Anyone can do the braising for you. Why

insist on singling me out for the job?"

"Braise them or not, whichever you please," said Lai-hsing. "It's up to you now. I've got something else to do." Saying which, he walked nonchalantly out without more ado.

"You'd better leave off and do that braising as requested," said Yü-hsiao. "You know what sort of a mouth the Fifth Lady has. The next thing you know we'll have another ruckus on our hands."

"How on earth does the Fifth Lady know I can braise pig's head?" laughed Hui-lien. "Why should she insist on singling me out to do the job for her?"

Thereupon she got up, went into the kitchen, dipped out a wokful of water, trimmed the pig's head and trotters carefully, shoved a single long stick of firewood into the stove, mixed a large bowlful of oil, soy sauce, and star anise in just the right proportions to add to the brew, and then fitted the lid of the pewter braising pan tightly in place. In less than two hours the pig's head was braised to the point that:

The skin was separated and the flesh falling apart.

Redolently fragrant:

All five flavors were fully represented.[1]

Arranging her handiwork on a large platter with accompanying saucers of chopped ginger and garlic, Hui-lien got a page boy to put it in a square box and deliver it to Li P'ing-erh's quarters in the front compound while she opened the jug of Chin-hua wine and prepared it for serving.



Li P’ing-erh Loses a Board Game and Stands a Treat

Meng Yü-lou set aside a generous plateful of the finest meat and a flagon of Chin-hua wine for Yüeh-niang’s benefit and ordered a

maidservant to take them to the master suite. The three women then sat down around the table and proceeded to pour themselves some wine. Just as they were enjoying their repast, who should walk into their presence with an ingratiating giggle but Hui-lien.

"My mistresses," she said, "try a little of this pig's head. Did I manage to braise it to your satisfaction today?"

"The Third Lady has just been praising your skill," said Chin-lien. " 'This pig's head is as tender as can be,' she said."

"Is it really true," Li P'ing-erh asked, "that you only used a single stick of firewood?"

"To tell you the truth," Hui-lien replied, "it doesn't even take a whole stick of firewood. If I'd used the whole stick the meat would have fallen away from the bones."

"Fetch a large winecup," Yü-lou said to Hsiu-ch'un, "and pour out a cupful of wine for your sister to drink."

Li P'ing-erh promptly ordered Hsiu-ch'un to do as she was bidden while she herself filled a saucer with meat from the pig's head and handed it to Hui-lien, saying, "You made it yourself. Have a taste and see what you think."

"I know you don't like things to be overly salty," said Hui-lien, "but I'm afraid I went a little too easy on the soy sauce. It's all right, I guess, but the next time I braise anything for you I'll be able to do it better."

Thereupon:

Just as though inserting a taper in its holder,

she kowtowed to them three times and only then took up a position standing beside the table and joined them in their drinking.

That evening, when Yüeh-niang returned home and the womenfolk of the household came to greet her, Hsiao-yü brought out the portion of pig's head they had sent over and showed it to her mistress.

"We were playing a board game for stakes in Sister Li's place today," said Yü-lou, "and won a pig's head from her. We set aside part of it for you."

“That seems just a bit unfair,” said Yüeh-niang. “Everyone wants to be a winner. It’s hardly right that a single loser should have to bear the brunt. Why don’t we plan to do it this way instead? It’s only appropriate that during the holiday season each of us sisters ought to take her turn playing hostess to the rest. We can engage Big Sister Yü to entertain us during the evenings. What is there to prevent it? Wouldn’t that be better than insisting on having winners and losers and making one person pay the piper? What do you think of my suggestion?”

“Elder Sister’s suggestion is a good one,” they all said with one voice.

“Tomorrow is the fifth day of the first month,” said Yüeh-niang. “Let me start things off. I’ll send a page boy to engage the services of Big Sister Yü.”

Thereupon Li Chiao-erh opted for the sixth, Meng Yü-lou took the seventh, and P’an Chin-lien took the eighth.

“I’m getting off easy,” said Chin-lien. “That’s the eve of my birthday so I’d have to throw a party anyway. This way I can:

Kill two birds with one stone.”[2]

When they asked Sun Hsüeh-o she made no reply for quite a while.

“Let her be,” said Yüeh-niang. “Don’t try to pressure her into anything. Let Sister Li take the next day.”

“The ninth is Sister Six’s birthday,” said Yü-lou. “I’m afraid Old Mrs. P’an and your elder brother’s wife will be here.”

“Since we won’t be free on the ninth,” said Yüeh-niang, “we’ll get Sister Li to do her stint on the tenth, that’s all.”

With that they all felt that everything had been decided.

To make a long story short, Hsi-men Ch’ing was not at home on the fifth, having gone to a social engagement at a neighbor’s house. Wu Yüeh-niang hosted a feast in the master suite, at which Big Sister Yü provided the musical entertainment, and all the womenfolk drank merrily and made a day of it before the party broke up.

The next day it was Li Chiao-erh’s turn, after which came Yü-lou’s and then Chin-lien’s, but there is no need to describe this in detail.

In no time at all it was Chin-lien's birthday and Old Mrs. P'an and Yüeh-niang's elder brother's wife came to participate in the celebration.

Finally the tenth came and it was Li P'ing-erh's turn to play the role of hostess. She sent Hsiu-ch'un to the rear compound to invite Sun Hsüeh-o to join the party twice. Each time Hsüeh-o said that she was coming but failed to show up.

"Just as I said, I didn't think she would come," remarked Yü-lou, "but Sister Li keeps insisting on inviting her. She actually said to someone, 'You people with the money can take turns standing each other treat for ten days if you like. But don't expect the likes of me to:

Chase barefoot after the donkey's hooves.'

The way she put it, leaving aside the insult to the rest of us, would seem to imply that she takes our elder sister to be a donkey's hoof."

"As long as that worthless baggage knows enough to stick to her place," said Yüeh-niang, "there's no need for us to pay any attention to her. Don't bother to keep on inviting her."

Thereupon the wine was served and everyone assembled in Li P'ing-erh's quarters in the front compound for the feast. Big Sister Yü was there to provide the musical entertainment. Yüeh-niang's elder brother's wife and Hsi-men Ch'ing's daughter, Hsi-men Ta-chieh, were also present, making altogether a party of eight.

That day Hsi-men Ch'ing was not at home, having gone out to a social engagement.

"If your father comes home and wants a drink," Yüeh-niang said to Yü-hsiao, "you might as well serve it to him in the master suite."

Yü-hsiao nodded her assent.

Who could have anticipated that Hsi-men Ch'ing would arrive home early that afternoon. Yü-hsiao came forward and helped him off with his outer clothes.

"Where has Yüeh-niang gotten to?" asked Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"They're all at the Sixth Lady's place in the front compound," Yü-hsiao replied, "drinking wine with Wu K'ai's wife and Old Mrs. P'an."

“What kind of wine are they drinking?” asked Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“It’s Chin-hua wine,” replied Yü-hsiao.

“We’ve still got that crock of jasmine blossom wine that Ying Po-chüeh sent over as a New Year’s present,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “We might as well open it up and give it a try.”

Accordingly he instructed Yü-hsiao to broach the jasmine blossom wine.

Hsi-men Ch’ing tasted it, remarking as he did so, “It’s just the thing for your mistresses to drink,” and told Yü-hsiao and Hsiao-yü to lug it to Li P’ing-erh’s place in the front compound.

When Hui-lien, who was standing beside Yüeh-niang just then in order to pour for her, caught sight of Yü-hsiao delivering the wine, she adroitly hastened over to take the jug from her. Yü-hsiao took the opportunity to tip her a wink and give her a pinch on the hand, the significance of which was not lost on the woman.

“Who sent you to deliver the wine?” Yüeh-niang asked Yü-hsiao.

“Father sent me,” Yü-hsiao replied.

“How long has your father been home?” asked Yüeh-niang.

“He only just arrived,” said Yü-hsiao. “He asked what kind of wine you were drinking and when I said it was Chin-hua wine he told me to take this crock of jasmine blossom wine that Master Ying the Second gave us and bring it out for you to drink.”

“If your father wants anything himself,” Yüeh-niang said, “set up a table for him in the master suite. There are some ready-made dishes on hand that you can serve him.”

Yü-hsiao nodded her assent and returned to the rear compound.

Hui-lien continued standing in attendance at the party for a while and then said disingenuously, “Let me go back to the rear compound and fetch some tea for you to drink.”

“Tell your sister,” Yüeh-niang instructed her, “that there’s some Liu-an tea[3] in the cabinet in the master suite. You can steep a pot of that and bring it back for us to drink.”

That woman took off for the rear compound so fast that her feet:

Beat out a festive paradiddle as she went.[4]

She found Yü-hsiao standing in the doorway of the master suite. After fetching the tea for her she made a meaningful moue, at which the woman lifted aside the portiere and walked right into Yüeh-niang's parlor.

What should she see there but Hsi-men Ch'ing, sitting in a chair and drinking wine. Without more ado she went up to him and proceeded to park her posterior in his lap, whereupon the two of them fell to kissing and sucking each other's tongues. While, down below, the woman grasped his organ in her hand, up above, she took a sip of wine and transferred it into the mouth of her companion.

"Father," the woman said to him, "if you've got any breath-sweetening lozenges give me a few more. The ones you gave me the other day are all gone."

"I also owe several mace to Auntie Hsüeh for trinkets," she went on to say. "If you've got any money handy give me a little so I can pay her."

"There ought to be a tael or two left in my wallet," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Go ahead and take it."

As he spoke Hsi-men Ch'ing endeavored to unfasten her trousers.

"It won't do," the woman said. "I'm afraid someone might come along and see us."

"Don't go out front today," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Stay in the rear compound and we can have some real fun together tonight."

The woman shook her head, saying, "The rear compound reminds me of what happens when:

The wagons from the Firewood Office block the road:
There are too many sticks about.

We'd better make it the Fifth Lady's place again. That would be:

Two under full four words."[5]

Thereupon Yü-hsiao resumed her place outside the door of the master suite to act as lookout and permitted the two of them to dally with each other as they pleased.

As the saying goes:

Even if you only talk along the road,
There may be someone lurking in the grass.

All their precautions did not prevent Sun Hsüeh-o from happening along from the back of the compound and overhearing the sound of laughing voices from inside the master suite. At first she thought it was Yü-hsiao engaged in badinage with Hsi-men Ch'ing, but who could have anticipated that Yü-hsiao turned out to be sitting on the veranda. On seeing this she came to a halt.

Yü-hsiao was afraid that she might go into the room, so she immediately endeavored to divert her by saying, "The Sixth Lady from the front compound is expecting you. Why don't you go along and have something to drink?"

"I'm totally out of favor," Hsüeh-o snorted sardonically.

"Plant a mulberry in a marshland, and
Nobody will climb it.
Mount a person on a racehorse, and
Nobody will overtake him.

Where would I get the wherewithal to take my turn with the rest of them in standing each other treat for ten days?

I'm such a menial underling,
I can't afford my underthings."

Her monologue was brought to a halt by an audible cough from Hsi-men Ch'ing inside the room which induced Hsüeh-o to take herself off to the kitchen.

Yü-hsiao lifted aside the portiere and the woman, once she saw the coast was clear, nimbly stepped out and headed toward the rear of the compound to take care of the tea.

In no time at all Hsiao-yü came in from outside and called out, "Sister Hui-lien, the mistress wants to know how come you went to get the tea and never came back with it."

"The tea's ready," the woman said. "I'm just waiting for the fruit kernels to flavor it with."

Before long, with Hsiao-yü carrying the cups and raised saucers and Hui-lien lugging the teapot, they went straight back to the front compound.

“How come it took you so long to get the tea?” demanded Yüeh-niang.

“Father was drinking wine in the parlor,” said Hui-lien, “so I didn’t dare go in myself. I had to wait while Sister fetched the tea leaves and the fruit kernels were peeled.”

Thereupon everyone was served with tea, after which Hsiao-yü collected the cups and raised saucers and returned to the rear compound.

Hui-lien stood there, leaning against the table, and looked on as Yüeh-niang and the others threw dice.

“Mistress,” she said, deliberately raising her voice, “your double ones and double sixes make the combination ‘Heaven and Earth Separated,’ so you’ve beaten the Fifth Lady.”

“Sixth Lady,” she said next, “your double sixes and double fours make the combination ‘Brocade Screen’ and add up to twenty spots, whereas the Third Lady’s one, three, and double fives only add up to fourteen spots, so she loses.”[6]

This irritated Yü-lou so much that she said, “For a servant’s wife like you to:

Stick your beak in and wag your tongue,[7]

while we’re playing dice together is completely out of place.”

These few words put the woman in a situation where she could neither:

Stand her ground, nor
Rise up to go,

without embarrassment. The blood flew to her cheeks and she was compelled to beat a hasty retreat. Truly:

Even if one could draw off all the water
of the West River,
It would hardly suffice to wash away
this day’s shame.[8]

The womenfolk continued their drinking until lamplighting time, when whom should they see but Hsi-men Ch’ing lifting aside the portiere and coming into the room.

“You’re certainly making a day of it,” he said with a laugh.

Wu K’ai’s wife jumped up, saying, “Brother-in-law has arrived,” and hastily offered him her seat.

“Why don’t you continue to do your drinking in the rear compound?” said Yüeh-niang. “We’re all women here and you’re a man. What’s the idea of barging in on us this way?”

“If that’s the way you want it,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “I’ll go elsewhere.”

Thereupon, suiting his action to his words, he went over to Chin-lien’s quarters. Chin-lien made haste to follow him there and saw that he was half drunk.

Taking hold of Chin-lien, he said, “Little oily mouth, I’ve got a favor to ask of you. I’d really like to keep Hui-lien overnight in the rear compound, but there’s no convenient place there. Do you think you could make room for us to spend the night at your place? How about it?”

“I’d only be wasting my breath on you,” retorted Chin-lien. “That’s enough of your delirious nonsense. You can screw around with her wherever you like, her and her simpering ways, without having to do it at my place. I don’t have any place to put her. And even if I were willing to go along with you, Ch’un-mei, that lousy little piece, would never consent to have her here. If you don’t believe me, I’ll call that little piece, Ch’un-mei, in here and you can ask her yourself. If she agrees, I’ll go along with you, even if it means her staying in my own bedroom.”

“If neither of you will agree,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “that’s that. I’ll go spend the night with her in the grotto underneath the hill in the garden. Order one of your maidservants to take a set of bedding there and light a brazier or we’ll never be able to stand the cold.”

“I’d just be wasting my breath on you,” Chin-lien couldn’t help laughing. “That lousy slave of a whore! You’d think she was the mother that bore you. You’re another Wang Hsiang, braving the frigid cold of the twelfth month and lying on the icy surface of that stone bench to prove your filiality.”[9]

“You crazy little oily mouth!” Hsi-men Ch’ing laughed at her. “Stop making fun of me. Enough is enough. Whatever happens, get a maidservant to light a brazier for us.”

“You go ahead,” said Chin-lien. “I know what to do.”

That evening, when the party for the women of the household broke up, Chin-lien actually did order Ch’iu-chü to bundle up some bedding and carry live coals out to make the necessary preparations in Hidden Spring Grotto, as the whitewashed “snow cave” under the artificial hill was called.

Hui-lien accompanied Yüeh-niang, Li Chiao-erh, and Yü-lou as far as the inner gate that separated the front and rear compounds.

“Mistress,” she said disingenuously at this point, “I won’t accompany you any further, but go back up front.”

“That’s all right,” said Yüeh-niang. “Go back up front and get some sleep.”

After seeing Yüeh-niang and the others safely inside, the woman remained standing for a while outside the inner gate. As soon as she was sure there was no one about she disappeared under the artificial hill in a puff of smoke. Truly:

There is no need for King Hsiang to wear out
his longing eyes;
The Goddess of Witch’s Mountain delivers
the clouds and rain herself.[10]

When Sung Hui-lien passed through the garden gate, thinking that Hsi-men Ch’ing might not be inside yet, she did not put on the latch and thus left the door standing closed but unlocked. When she arrived in Hidden Spring Grotto, however, whom should she see but Hsi-men Ch’ing, who had preceded her and was already:

Sitting there with candle in hand.[11]

Once inside the woman became aware that:

A cold wind assailed her,[12] and
The couch was thick with dust.

Thereupon she drew two sticks of incense out of her sleeve, lit them from the candle in the lantern, and stuck them in the ground. Even though there was a brazier of burning charcoal on the floor it was

cold enough to make her shiver. The woman first unrolled the bedding on the bench and then laid a sable robe, cut like a Ch'an monk's cassock, on top of it. Then the two of them:

Closed tight the double-leaved door,
Got into bed and prepared to sleep.

Hsi-men Ch'ing took off his outer garments and sat on the bench in his white satin tunic, cut like the robe of a Taoist priest. Removing the woman's trousers, he took her onto his lap with her two legs splayed to either side and abruptly inserted his organ into her vagina. The two of them embraced each other and devoted themselves wholeheartedly to the task at hand.

They remained quite oblivious of P'an Chin-lien who, as soon as she ascertained that the two of them were:

Safely in the harbor,

took off her headdress in her room:

Lightly moved her lotus feet,

and crept stealthily toward the garden to see if she could overhear what the two of them said to each other in private. When she reached the postern gate she gave it a shove and, finding it open, proceeded to enter with:

Slow and surreptitious step.

Not fearing lest:

The dank green moss should chill her
"wave-tripping" stockings; or
The thorns on the flowers do an injury
to her skirt or jacket,

she proceeded with:

Skulking step and furtive stance,

to take up an eavesdropping position beneath the moon window of Hidden Spring Grotto.

She saw that the lanterns and candles were still alight and overheard the woman saying to Hsi-men Ch'ing with a laugh, "You're just the sort of benefactor who'd:

Donate ice to a homeless shelter in the dead of winter.

Is there no limit to the discomfort you'll put up with, you old beggar? Do you mean to say you can't come up with a better place for a tryst than this Cold Ice Hell?[13] I'd better:

Put a rope in my mouth so if I freeze to death,
You'll have something to haul me out with."

"It's frigid in here!" she continued. "Let's go to sleep. What are you so intent on examining my feet for anyway? You'd think you'd never seen anyone with small feet before. The only thing is I don't have any shoe uppers. Couldn't you contrive to buy me a pair somehow? I see other people making shoes all the time, but I can't make any for myself."

"My child," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "that's no problem. Tomorrow I'll buy you several mace worth of different patterned uppers. Who would have thought your feet are even smaller than the Fifth Lady's?"

"There's no comparison," the woman said. "The other day I tried on one of her shoes and found that I could wear it over my own. But it's not size that matters so much as the stylishness of the shoe."

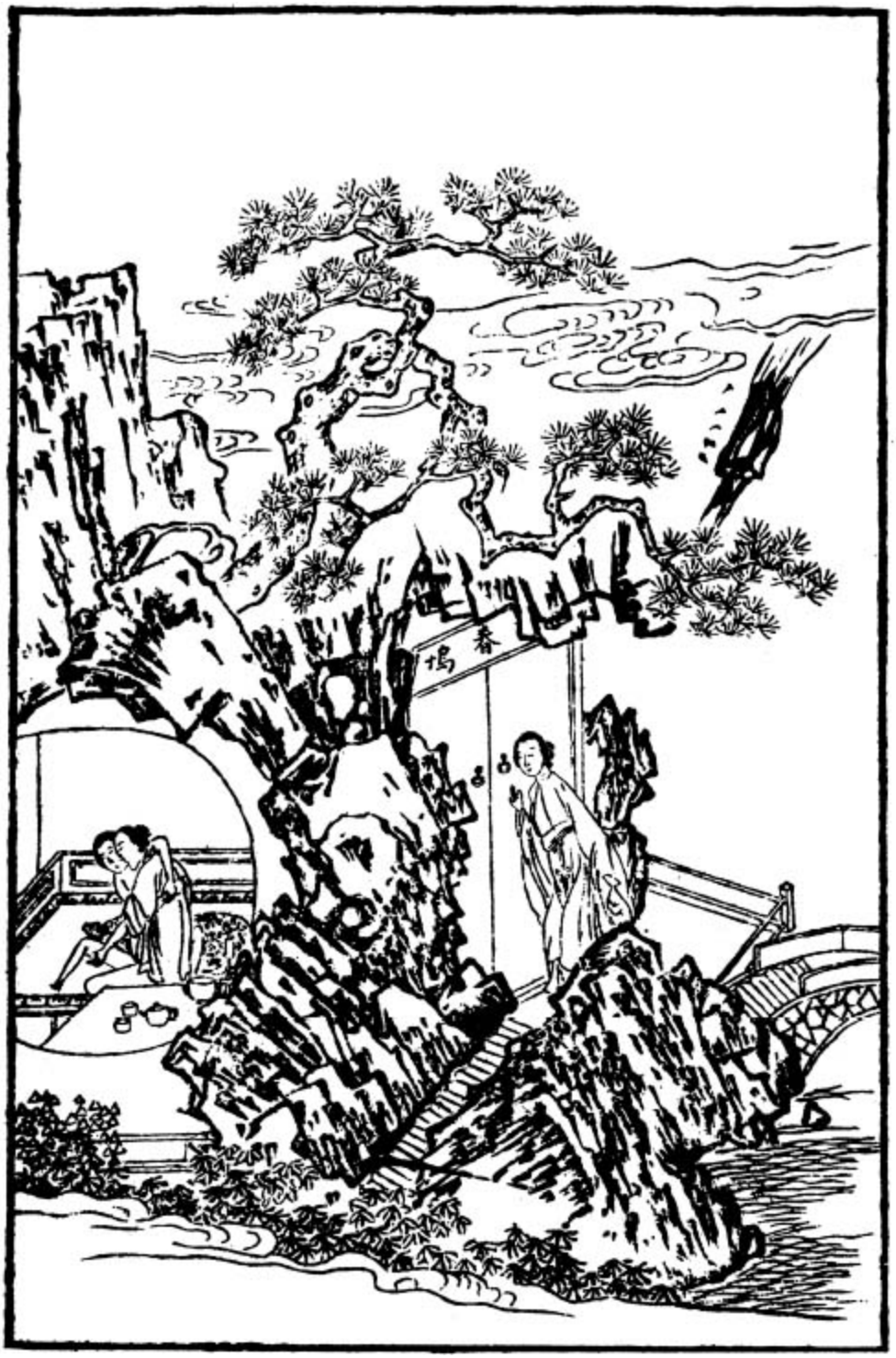
When Chin-lien heard this from her vantage point outside the room she muttered to herself, "That slave of a whore! I'd better listen a little longer and see what else she has to say."

Thereupon she continued to eavesdrop for some time and overheard the woman asking Hsi-men Ch'ing, "How long is it since you married that fifth 'object of Ch'iu Hu's roving eye'[14] of yours? Was she a virgin when you married her, or had she been married before?"

"She'd been married before," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"No wonder:

She's such a practiced old hand,"



Chin-lien Eavesdrops outside Hidden Spring Grotto

the woman said. “So, once she’d caught your eye, it was a case of:

Cohabitation amid the dewdrops.”

Nothing might have happened if Chin-lien had not overheard this, but having heard it, she got so angry where she stood outside the room that her two arms went soft on her and it was some time before she could stir from the spot.

“If that slave of a whore is allowed to carry on this way,” she said to herself, “it won’t be long before she pushes the rest of us aside.”

She would have raised a rumpus then and there but was afraid of arousing Hsi-men Ch’ing’s nasty temper, the end result of which might be only to enhance the whore’s status. On the other hand, if she allowed her to get away with it, she feared that the woman could not be called to account in the future.

“The thing to do,” she thought to herself finally, “is to leave her a clue so she’ll realize that she’s been overheard and then settle accounts with her tomorrow.”

Thereupon she went out by the postern gate, pulled a silver hairpin from her head and stuck it through the hasp so that the door was locked from the outside, and then returned to her room in high dudgeon and went to bed for the night. Of the events of that evening there is no more to tell.[15]

Bright and early the next morning, Hui-lien was the first to get up, hurried into her clothes, and went out without doing her hair. She noticed that the postern gate was unlatched and felt a sudden pang of consternation. When she tried the door, however, she shook it for half a day but could not get it to open. She ran back to tell Hsi-men Ch’ing, who called to Ying-ch’un in the adjacent courtyard to open it for her. When she saw that the gate had been locked with a hairpin she recognized it as one of Chin-lien’s and realized that she must have been eavesdropping on her the night before.

Feeling as though she were:

> Carrying a spectral fetus,[16]

the woman hurried out to the front of the compound and was just opening the door to her living quarters when whom should she encounter but P’ing-an, who emerged from the privy and greeted her with a knowing grin.

“You crazy jailbird!” Hui-lien said to him. “Who do you think you’re showing your teeth to with such a grin?”

“Sister,” said P’ing-an, “it seems that even a smile is enough to drive you mad.”

“At the crack of dawn,” retorted Hui-lien, “what is there to laugh about for no good reason?”

“I’m laughing at you, Sister,” said P’ing-an, “because it seems that:

Not having had a bite for three days,
You’ve got flowers before your eyes.[17]

My guess would be you didn’t manage to make it home at all last night.”

On hearing these words, the woman’s face turned red and she started to curse, saying, “You lousy, scurrilous jailbird! You’ve been seeing things. Just what night was it that I didn’t sleep in my own room or show up at home?

If you throw a tile into the air,
It’s got to come down to earth.”

“I noticed that your door was locked on the outside only a minute ago,” said P’ing-an. “You can scarcely weasel out of that.”

“I got up early this morning,” Hui-lien asserted, “and went to the Fifth Lady’s place. It was only just now I was able to come back out. Where’ve you been all this time, you jailbird?”

“I hear the Fifth Lady has asked you to pickle crabs for her,” said P’ing-an, “because of your reputation as a leg-splitter. No wonder she sent you out to the front gate to watch the winnowers at work. They say you’ve mastered the art of rotating your tongue the way they rotate their winnowing sieves.”

This sally really got under the woman’s skin. Snatching up a door-bar, she chased P’ing-an around the courtyard, cursing as she went.

“You lousy, delirious jailbird! Just wait and see whether I tell about this or not. You’ll get something to remember me by, never fear. Have you lost all sense of decorum, or what?”

“Ai-ya, Sister!” exclaimed P’ing-an. “Take it easy, will you! Just who are you going to tell about it? Of course, I know you’ve flown to a higher branch than the rest of us.”

Hui-lien was so aggravated all she could do was continue to chase after him with the door-bar.

Who could have anticipated that at just this juncture Tai-an should stride out through the portiere of the pawnshop and seize the door-bar in his hand, saying, “Sister, what are you trying to beat him for?”

“Why don’t you ask that grinning devil of a jailbird?” replied Hui-lien. “He’s got me so angry with his:

Ridiculous blatherskite,
that my arms have gone soft on me.”

P’ing-an seized the opportunity to make himself scarce.

Pushing the woman before him, Tai-an said to her, “Sister, don’t:

Let your temper get the better of you.
You’d better go home and do your hair.”

The woman then reached into the gourd purse at her waist, took out three or four candareens of silver, and gave them to Tai-an, saying, “Could I trouble you to pick up a large bowl of broth and two kinds of prepared ingredients for a pot-au-feu? You can put the broth right into my saucepan.”

“That’s no problem,” said Tai-an. “I’ll go take care of it.”

Accepting the money with one hand, he hurriedly washed his face and then saw to the preparation of the pot-au-feu. The woman gave a bowlful to Tai-an and ate a bowlful herself. Only then did she comb her hair, lock the door, and go report for duty at Yüeh-niang’s quarters in the rear compound.

This done, she made her way to Chin-lien’s place where she found her sitting at the mirror in the process of performing her morning toilet. Hui-lien played up to her punctiliously by standing deferentially to one side, offering to hold the mirror for her as she brushed her hair, and fetching the water for her to wash her hands

with. Chin-lien did not so much as look at her or pay her the slightest attention.

"I've rolled up your sleeping shoes and foot bindings," said Hui-lien. "Shall I put them away for you?"

"Let them be," said Chin-lien. "Leave them where they are. I'll have the maidservant come in and put them away."

"Ch'iu-chü!" she then called out. "The lousy slave. Where could she have gotten to?"

"Ch'iu-chü's sweeping the courtyard," said Hui-lien, "though Sister Ch'un-mei is over there doing her hair."

"Don't worry about it," said Chin-lien. "Let them be. You'd better leave them for the maidservants to put away. After all, they've been in contact with these:

Crooked-hooved clodhopping feet,

of mine. I wouldn't want you to soil your hands with them. You'd do better to save your attentions for your father. You seem to be the only sort of person capable of pleasing him. The rest of us are all guilty of:

Cohabitation amid the dewdrops.

We're all 'remarried goods.' You're the only one, Sister, to have entered the household in a real bridal palanquin, to be his legitimate wife, the true 'object of Ch'iu Hu's roving eye.' "

These words had the effect of striking the woman's sore spot from the night before. Thereupon, falling to her knees, she said, "Mother, you're one of my mistresses, after all. If you don't see fit to:

Lift high your gracious hand,[18]

I would have no place to stand for even an instant. From the very outset, without your generous consent, I would never have presumed to accede to Father's demands. Even the First Lady in the rear compound is really no more than a figurehead. It's you who have done the most for me. You don't suppose I'd dare take liberties with you, do you? You can investigate as much as you like. If I have ever taken any liberties with you by so much as a word, may I come to a bad end. May I develop a boil in every hair follicle."

“That’s not the point,” said Chin-lien. “I’m:

Not the sort of person to let dust

be thrown in her eyes.

So long as my husband wants you, you don’t suppose I’d stoop to competing for him, do you? But I’m not going to let you get away with any of your mischief or:

Idle words and idle chatter,

in front of him. If you think you can trample the rest of us underfoot, leaving you with a free field in which to kick up your heels, Sister, let me tell you, you’d better get any such thoughts out of your head.”

“Look into it further, Mother,” protested Hui-lien. “I’ve never dared take any liberties with you. I fear you must have misheard me last night.”

“My foolish sister,” said Chin-lien. “Do you think I’d have the patience to eavesdrop on you? Let me tell you something. Not even ten wives could hope to satisfy a man’s every desire. Even though your father has these several wives of his at home, every time he chooses to entertain a powdered face outside, when he comes back he conceals nothing from me, but gives me a word for word account of everything that happened. Ask around a bit. You’ll find that even back when he and the Sixth Lady were so close that they seemed to:

Breath through the same nostrils,[19]

there was nothing he didn’t tell me about their doings when he got home. And you’re not even in the same league with her.”

This speech had the effect of reducing the woman to silence. She stood around the room for a while and then went out.

As she was going through the enclosed passageway beside the inner gate she ran into Hsi-men Ch’ing and accosted him, saying, “A fine fellow you are! You’re about as much good at keeping things to yourself as a greased chute! You’ve gone and spilled every word I said to you yesterday, and today I’ve had to stand the gaff. Whatever I say to you in the future, keep it to yourself, even if you have to keep it till it rots. What can you have been thinking of to tell such things to anyone else? That mouth of yours is:

Nothing but a leaky trough.[20]

Even if I have something to say, I'll never tell you anything again."

"What are you talking about?" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "I don't know anything about it."

The woman merely gave him a look and stalked off toward the front of the compound.

In the past this woman had always possessed a glib tongue. She was in the habit of hanging around at the front gate:

Buying this and buying that.[21]

She addressed the manager, Fu Ming, familiarly as Brother Fu; Ch'en Ching-chi as Brother-in-law; and Pen the Fourth as Old Four. Since commencing her affair with Hsi-men Ch'ing she had become even bolder in public than before. In fact:

Engaging in badinage and repartee,
She was completely without restraint.[22]

For example, she might say, "Brother Fu, allow me to salute you. Would you be so kind as to keep your eye out for any peddler of cosmetics that might come by the front gate."

Manager Fu was a decent sort and would actually keep on the lookout for her around the front gate and, if he saw a peddler come by, stop him and call her out to make her purchases.

Tai-an made a point of teasing her about this by saying, "Sister, the cosmetics man went by early this morning. If you had only been out early enough with the steelyard you might have weighed out as much as you liked."

"You lousy monkey!" the woman railed at him. "It's the Fifth Lady and the Sixth Lady from inside who commissioned me to buy face powder for them. What do you mean by your talk of weighing it out with the steelyard, as if I were buying three catties of rouge or two catties of powder? Those whores would really have to lay it on thick to get through quantities like that. Just wait and see whether I tell on you or not when I go back inside."

"Ai-ya, Sister!" exclaimed Tai-an. "Whatever I do, you try to overawe me with the Fifth Lady."

Before long she came out again, saying, “Pen, Old Four, would you be so kind as to keep your eye out for any peddler of costume jewelry that might come by the front gate. I’d like to buy a pair of plum blossom and a pair of chrysanthemum hair ornaments.”

Pen the Fourth, neglecting his business, made a special point of keeping a lookout for her and, when a peddler of costume jewelry did come by, stopped him and called her out to make her purchases. The woman stood inside the inner gate, opened up the peddler’s box, and picked out two pairs of large artificial flower ornaments to wear in the hair over her temples, as well as two purple, shot satin, gold lame handkerchiefs, costing in all a total of seven mace and five candareens of silver.

The woman reached into her pocket, groped out a fragment consisting of about half a silver ingot, and asked Pen the Fourth to cut it for her and weigh out the seven mace and five candareens that she owed the vendor. Pen the Fourth was engaged at that moment in writing up the accounts, but he dropped what he was doing, came over to where she was standing, squatted down on the ground, and began to chisel away at the silver for her.

Who should come up just then but Tai-an, who said, “Let me chisel it for you, Sister.”

He took the silver in one hand, but instead of chiseling it, subjected it to a close examination.

“You’re not chiseling it, you lousy monkey!” said the woman. “What do you expect to find by examining it so closely? You mean to say you didn’t hear the dog biting an intruder in the middle of the night? It’s stolen silver.”

“I wouldn’t say it was stolen,” said Tai-an. “But it does have a familiar look about it. In fact, I’d say it came out of Father’s wallet. It looks to me like this silver is the half ingot left over when Father had a piece cut to pay off that Southerner who sells square-cut scholar’s caps in the Lantern Market the other day. My memory is:

As certain as certain can be.”[23]

“You lousy jailbird!” the woman protested. “There are look-alikes aplenty even among the people of this world. How could Father’s

silver have ended up in my hands anyway?”

“How should I know what transactions were involved?” laughed Tai-an.

At this, the woman ran after him and gave him what for with her fists. In the end, the page boy chiseled off seven mace and five candareens worth of silver and gave it to the vendor of the costume jewelry but kept the remaining silver in his hand and refused to return it.

“You lousy jailbird!” exclaimed the woman. “If you dare walk off with my money, I’ll call you a brave man.”

“I wouldn’t take anything of yours,” said Tai-an. “Why don’t you give me a little of what’s left over and I’ll buy us something to eat?”

“You lousy monkey!” the woman said. “Hand it over and I’ll give you something.”

When she had thus tricked Tai-an into surrendering his spoils, she merely tossed him a fragment weighing four or five candareens, stuffed the remainder into her pocket, and went straight back inside the compound.

From this time on, she was constantly to be seen at the front gate, buying fabric samples, costume jewelry, handkerchiefs, and the like, by the tael; or even going so far as to purchase four or five pints of melon seeds at a time and distribute them among the maids of the various apartments to share with their mistresses. Her coiffure was adorned with a pearl headband and gold lantern earrings, of glittering aureate hue. Beneath her upper garments, she wore red trousers of Lu-chou silk with drawnwork kneepads. In her wide sleeves she carried breath-sweetening lozenges flavored with osmanthus, while three or four sachets of pomander were suspended at her waist. Her expenditures of this kind averaged two or three mace of silver a day, all of which had been given to her by Hsi-men Ch’ing on the sly. But there is no need to describe this in detail.

From the time Chin-lien revealed the fact that she had seen through her devices, this woman started to haunt Chin-lien’s room on a daily basis, playing up to her with every trick at her disposal.

She prepared tea and boiled water for her, stitched shoes and did needlework:

Fetching things, whether they were wanted or not; and
Doing things, whether they were called for or not.

With regard to her real job in Yüeh-niang's quarters in the rear compound, all she did each day was to put in a pro forma appearance and then come out to Chin-lien's place in the front compound. Every day she made a threesome with Chin-lien and Li P'ing-erh to play board games or dominoes. If Hsi-men Ch'ing happened to show up while the woman was present, Chin-lien saw to it that she stood at his side to pour the wine and then sat down beside him as one of the company. As a result she was able to regale herself every day with:

Unlimited quantities of meat and wine.

Chin-lien did all this solely in order to ingratiate herself with her husband while Hui-lien, for her part, became completely dependent on her patronage. Truly:

The wanton willow catkins dance wherever
the wind carries them;
The fickle peach blossoms float wherever
the water takes them.[24]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Chin-lien, desirous of favor, deploys
a devious stratagem;
Hui-lien, temporarily reprieved, invades
her master's bed.
The crowing hen fails to anticipate
imminent disaster;
Once the catastrophe has occurred
there is no going back.

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 24

CHING-CHI FLIRTS WITH A BEAUTY ON THE LANTERN FESTIVAL; HUI-HSIANG ANGRILY HURLS ABUSE AT LAI-WANG'S WIFE

Candles in silver sconces burn high,[1]
as inebriation reigns;
The party has become convivial,
laughter is frequent.
Lissome waists dance superbly
like the "willow" in the quarter;[2]
Sandalwood lips sing lightly
of "Spring in the Imperial Park."
Wafts of perfume invade his clothes,
as though intentionally;
Flowerlike ornaments fall to the ground,
to be noiselessly retrieved.
Were it not for this telltale detail
of breeze-borne romance;
How would Han Shou ever have awakened
from his drunken trance?[3]

THE STORY GOES that:

> The first full moon of the new year in Heaven,
> Is the evening of the Lantern Festival on earth.

Hsi-men Ch'ing had the reception hall in his home prepared for the occasion by:

Suspending decorated lanterns, and
Spreading out silken tablecloths.

It was the sixteenth day of the first month and a feast was laid on for the:

Jollification of the entire family.

In front they were protected by:

Standing screens and brocaded windbreaks like Shih Ch'ung's.

The scene was illuminated by:

Three hanging lanterns suspended on ropes of pearls.

To either side there were arrayed:

Many standing lanterns of exquisite workmanship.

Hsi-men Ch'ing and Wu Yüeh-niang occupied the places of honor, while the other members of the household, Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, Li P'ing-erh, Sun Hsüeh-o, and Hsi-men Ta-chieh, arranged themselves on the two sides. All of them were dressed in brocaded clothing with white satin jackets and blue skirts, except for Wu Yüeh-niang, who wore a full-sleeved robe of scarlet brocade and a sable cloak over a flower-sprigged skirt, while on her head:

Pearls and trinkets rose in piles;
A phoenix hairpin was half askew.

Ch'un-mei, Yu-hsiao, Ying-ch'un, and Lan-hsiang, the four household musicians, stood in attendance playing the psaltery and sounding the clappers as they performed Lantern Festival songs. A separate table was set up on the eastern side of the room for Hsi-men Ch'ing's son-in-law, Ch'en Ching-chi.

The usual:

Three soups and five courses,

were served.

Dainties were prepared of the rarest kind,
Fruits were provided just in season.[4]

Hsiao-yü, Yüan-hsiao, Hsiao-luan, and Hsiu-ch'un came and went to pour the wine.

Lai-wang's wife, Sung Hui-lien, was unable to participate in the party, but sat on a chair beneath the loggia, cracking melon seeds with her teeth. She waited until someone at the feast ordered more wine and then, raising her voice, called out, "Lai-an! Hua-fung! The mistress needs more heated wine for the party. Fetch it, and be quick about it. The lousy jailbirds! Not a single one of them is available to wait on them. I don't know where they could have gotten to."

Who should appear at this juncture but Hua-t'ung, who came in carrying the heated wine. Hsi-men Ch'ing took him to task, saying, "You lousy slave! Not a single one of you is available to wait on us. Where could you have gotten to? You lousy slave! You're lucky to escape a beating."

The page boy came out and complained to Hui-lien, "Sister, just who had gone off anywhere, that you should tell tales to the master, make such a fuss about it, and provoke him to curse me?"

"When they called for wine up there," said Hui-lien, "who told you not to be here to wait on them? What's it got to do with me? If he doesn't curse you, who should he curse?"

"The ground around here was nice and clean," said Hua-t'ung, "but now the whole area is covered with your melon seeds. If the master sees it, I'll get cursed all over again."

"You lousy jailbird!" said Hui-lien.

"Like a loan taken out in the sixth month,
You'll get paid back soon enough.[5]

What's the big deal? If you had to:

Carve the eyes of a Buddhist idol,[6]

or something difficult like that, your complaint might be justified. If you don't want to sweep them up, leave them where they are. I'll have another page boy do the sweeping. And if Father should ask me about it, I'll just tell him what happened."

"Ai-ya, Sister!" exclaimed Hua-t'ung. "Take it easy, will you! What do you want to quarrel with me for, anyway?"

Thereupon he fetched a broom and swept up the melon seeds for her. Sung Hui-lien continued to sit outside, cracking melon seeds

with her teeth, as before. But no more of this.

To resume our story, Hsi-men Ch'ing, from his vantage point at the head of the feast, noticed that his son-in-law, Ch'en Ching-chi, was out of wine and called this to P'an Chin-lien's attention. The latter hastily came down from her place, poured out a full cup of wine, and offered it to Ching-chi with a giggle, saying, "Son-in-law, your father has commanded it. Whatever you do, drain this cup of wine for me."

While accepting the wine, on the one hand, Ching-chi took the opportunity to give her a prolonged sidelong glance, on the other, saying, "Fifth Lady, please make yourself easy. Let me drink it at my leisure."

Contriving to cast Ching-chi into the shadow by interposing her body between him and the lamplight, the woman held the wine in her left hand until Ching-chi reached for it and then proceeded to give the back of his hand a pinch with her right hand. Ching-chi continued, for his part, to direct his gaze at the rest of the company while, at the same time, giving Chin-lien's little foot a playful kick under the table.

The woman smiled and said in a low voice, "You crazy oily mouth! If your father-in-law were to see what you're up to, what would you do?"

Gentle reader take note: The two of them had no thought for anything but their own surreptitious fun and games and remained quite oblivious to the presence of the woman, Sung Hui-lien, who observed their every move so clearly through the latticework in the window that she might well have exclaimed:

"Is it not delightful?"

Truly:



Ching-chi Flirts with a Beauty on the Lantern Festival

Those actually involved are befuddled;[7]
It is the bystander who sees clearly.[8]

Although the people at the feast had not noticed anything, Hui-lien was enabled by the apertures in the window lattice and the light of the lamp to see every detail.

From her mouth no word was uttered, but
In her heart she thought to herself,

"Ordinarily, around the likes of us, she's always careful to protest her own virtue. Who would have thought that on the sly she's been carrying on an affair with that young scamp all the time. Now that I've caught her out at something, if she ever gives me a hard time in the future, I'll have something to say to her."

Truly:

From a white rose blooming
in someone's garden,
She has secretly purloined
two or three sprigs.
Hidden within her silken sleeves
they cannot be seen;
Their fragrance is first detected
by the butterflies.

After the wine drinking had continued for some time, a servant from Ying Po-chüeh's place unexpectedly arrived with an invitation that Hsi-men Ch'ing come over to enjoy the lanterns and have a drink.

"You all:

Enjoy yourselves to your heart's content,"

Hsi-men Ch'ing enjoined Yüeh-niang. "I'm going over to Brother Ying the Second's place for a drink."

The two page boys, Tai-an and P'ing-an, accompanied him when he left.

Yüeh-niang and her sisterhood of wives continued to enjoy the pleasures of the feast for a while when, behold:

The silver river is clear and shallow;
The pearly dipper sparkles and glitters.[9]

The perfect orb of a resplendent moon rises in the east,
Illuminating the courtyard till it is as bright as day.

Among the women there were some who:

Returning to their rooms, changed their clothes.

Some who:

Underneath the moon, adjusted their coiffures.

And some who:

By glow of lantern light, stuck flowers in their hair.

The trio composed of Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, and Li P'ing-erh, who were also joined by Hui-lien, went out in front of the reception hall to watch Ch'en Ching-chi set off the fireworks, while Li Chiao-erh, Sun Hsüeh-o, and Hsi-men Ta-chieh followed Yüeh-niang's lead in returning to the rear compound.

"Father's not at home today," Chin-lien remarked to her two companions. "Why don't we ask our elder sister if we can go out for an excursion in the streets?"

Hui-lien, who was standing by their side, interjected, "If you do go, take me along with you."

"If you want to come too," said Chin-lien, "go back to the rear compound and ask the First Lady about it. Ask the Second Lady too and see if she wants to go. We'll wait for you here."

Hui-lien hastened off to the rear compound.

"She's not up to the job," said Yü-lou. "I'd better go along and make the request myself."

"I'm going back to my room to put on something more to wear," said Li P'ing-erh. "It'll be cold by the time we get back. It's likely to be late at night."

"Sister Li," said Chin-lien. "If you've got an extra cloak handy, bring one out for me to wear. It will save me a trip back to my room."

Li P'ing-erh nodded her assent and went off on her errand. This left Chin-lien all by herself to watch Ching-chi set off the fireworks. When she saw that no one else was about, she stepped right up and

gave him a pinch, saying with a smile, “Son-in-law, if that thin clothing is really all you’ve got on, you must be cold aren’t you?”

But she had failed to notice that the head servant, Lai-chao’s, boy, Little Iron Rod, was giggling and dancing about right in front of them, tugging at Ching-chi’s clothing and begging, “Master Son-in-law, give me some fire-crackers to set off.”

Ching-chi was afraid the boy would interrupt the proceedings, so he could hardly wait to give him a couple of “Lantern Festival crackers”[10] and thus induce him to go outside and play.

Thereupon:

Engaging in badinage and repartee,

he proceeded to flirt with Chin-lien, saying, “If you’ve noticed what thin clothing I’ve got on, what are you going to do about it? How about giving me something of your own to wear?”

“You lousy short-life!” exclaimed Chin-lien. “You’ve gotten away with enough as it is. You were playing footsie with me just now, and I didn’t say anything about it. And now you’ve got the colossal nerve to ask me for something of mine to wear. I’m not the one you’re after. Why should I give you something of mine to wear?”

“If you refuse, that’s all there is to it,” said Ching-chi. “What’s the idea of trying to scare me with such trumped up charges?”

“You lousy short-life!” responded Chin-lien. “You’re just like:

The sparrow on the city battlements:
A creature quite inured to such alarms.”

As they were speaking, Yü-lou came out again, along with Hui-lien, and reported to Chin-lien, “The First Lady is feeling poorly in her present condition and Hsi-men Ta-chieh is not in the mood, so they won’t come. The rest of us are to go ahead as long as we try to be back by a reasonable hour. Li Chiao-erh’s legs are bothering her, so she won’t come. When Sun Hsüeh-o saw that our elder sister wasn’t coming, she was afraid Father would be annoyed with her if he happened to come home and also refused to go out.”

“So none of them want to come,” said Chin-lien. “You and I and Sister Li might as well go by ourselves then. If Father comes home while we’re out, let him curse anyone he wants to. Better yet, let’s

get that little piece Ch'un-mei, Yü-hsiao from the master suite, Lan-hsiang from your place, and Ying-ch'un from Sister Li's place, and take them all along with us. Then if Father comes home and wants to know what's going on, she'll have even more explaining to do."

Hsiao-yü came up, at this juncture, and said, "Since my mistress isn't going, let me go along with the rest of you."

"Tell your mistress you're coming," said Yü-lou. "We'll wait for you up front."

After some time, Hsiao-yü came back out after asking Yüeh-niang's permission with a happy giggle on her face.

Thereupon the three women were ready to set out with their crowd of male and female retainers in tow. The two page boys, Lai-an and Hua-t'ung, accompanied them with hanging, gauze-covered lanterns. The son-in-law, Ch'en Ching-chi, stood on the mounting platform setting off fireworks and igniting firecrackers to amuse the ladies.

"Master Son-in-law," Sung Hui-lien said to him, "whatever happens, wait a minute for me, will you? The ladies are taking me with them on their ramble. I'm going to my room to do up my hair. I'll be right back."

"But we're ready to start right now," Ching-chi protested.

"If you don't wait for me," said Hui-lien, "I'll be annoyed with you for the rest of my life."

Thereupon she went to her room where she changed into an outfit consisting of a jacket of green silk material, shot with red, that opened down the middle, over a white drawnwork skirt. She also did up her hair in a red, gold lame kerchief, pasted three gold-flecked turquoise beauty patches on her fore-head, and put on a pair of gold lantern earrings.

Thus attired, she came out to join the rest of the party in the traditional Lantern Festival custom of "walking off the hundred ailments."[11]

By the light of the moonbeams,
They appeared to be goddesses.

The three ladies were all wearing white satin jackets and brocaded vests. On their heads:

Pearls and trinkets rose in piles;

setting off their:

Powdered faces and ruby lips.

Ch'en Ching-chi and Lai-hsing, one on the left and the other on the right, set off:

"Slow-blooming lotus blossoms,"
"Golden thread chrysanthemums,"
"Ten-foot high orchids," and
"Brighter than moonlights,"[12]

as they proceeded on their way.

When they emerged into the marketplace on the main street, behold:

The fragrant dust never settles,
The revelers swarm like ants,[13]
Firecrackers thunder,
Lantern lights shimmer,
The din of flutes and drums resounds,
The merrymaking is at its height.

The bystanders to left and right were treated to the spectacle of a contingent of gauze-covered lanterns lighting the way for a bevy of men and women, all of whom were:

Sporting red and trailing green.[14]

Assuming that they came from the household of some noble family, they:

Scarcely dared to gaze upon them,[15] and
Endeavored to keep out of their way.

One moment Sung Hui-lien was saying, "Master Son-in-law, set off a rocket[16] for me, will you?"

The next moment she was saying, "Master Son-in-law, set off some 'Lantern Festival crackers' for me, will you?"

One moment she was dropping some item of her costume jewelry and then picking it up again.

The next moment she was losing her shoe and then leaning against a certain party while she fiddled with it.

Trying first this and then that,

her sole concern was to carry on a flirtation with Ch'en Ching-chi.

Meng Yü-lou could abide it no longer and took her to task, demanding, "How come you're the only one who keeps losing her shoe?"

"She's afraid it's muddy underfoot," said Yü-hsiao, "so she's wearing a pair of the Fifth Lady's shoes over her own."

"Tell her to come here and let me see," said Yü-lou. "Can she really be wearing the Fifth Lady's shoes?"

"She did borrow a pair of my shoes the other day," said Chin-lien. "Who would have thought the preternatural bitch would put them on over her own?"

Hui-lien thereupon hitched up her skirt for Yü-lou's benefit and revealed that she was, indeed, wearing two pairs of red shoes on her feet, underneath ankle leggings the ends of which were tied in place with lengths of sand-green cord. Yü-lou did not say another word on the subject.

Before long they had traversed the main street and arrived in the Lantern Market.

"As long as we're here," Chin-lien said to Yü-lou, "why don't we go pay a visit to Sister Li's house on Lion Street?"

Thereupon, they instructed Hua-t'ung and Lai-an to go in front with their lanterns and then proceeded to wend their way along Lion Street. The page boys went ahead and knocked on the gate.

Old Mother Feng had already gone to bed for the night. There were two young girls that were being offered for sale as indentured servants sleeping on the same k'ang with her. Old Mother Feng bestirred herself to open the door and usher in the crowd of lady visitors. After which she poked up the fire in the brazier, put on the teakettle, picked up a jug, and started out into the street to fetch wine for the company.

"Wait a minute, Old Feng," said Meng Yü-lou. "There's no need to go out after wine. We've had more than enough to eat and drink at

home. If you've got any tea handy, just pour us a cup or two, that's all."

"If you're going to serve people wine," said Chin-lien, "the least you could do is order up a feast to go with it."

"Old Mother," said Li P'ing-erh, "a mere bottle or two will be;

Hardly enough to discolor the water.[17]

That will never suffice. You'll have to lay in a full jug or two."

"She's only kidding," said Yü-lou. "There's no need to go out for anything. Just serve us some tea."

Only then did the old woman come to a standstill.

"Old Mother," said Li P'ing-erh, "why don't you come over to my place for a visit once in a while? I really have no idea what you do with yourself all day over here."

"Mistress," the old woman said, "you can see for yourself. I've got these two karmic encumbrances on my hands with nobody else to look after them."

Yü-lou then asked, "Who is putting the two serving girls up for sale?"

"One of them," the old woman replied, "was a chambermaid in a household in the Northern Quarter. She's twelve years old, and they only want five taels of silver for her. The other was the wife of a retainer in the household of Usher Wang of the Court of State Ceremonial. Her husband ran away so her master has impounded the fret indicating her status as a married woman and had her taken away to be put up for sale. He wants ten taels of silver for her."

"Let me tell you something, Old Mother," said Yü-lou. "I know someone who's in the market for such wares, and you ought to be able to turn a tidy profit for yourself."

"Third Lady," said the old woman, "who have you got in mind? Tell me who it is."

"At the present time," said Yü-lou, "the Second Lady has only Yüan-hsiao to wait upon her, so she's shorthanded. She's looking for a more mature serving girl to work for her. You might as well offer to sell her the older of these two."

“How old is this girl?” she went on to ask.

“She was born in the year of the ox,” the old woman replied, “so this year she should be sixteen.”

As they spoke, the tea was brought in and everyone had some to drink. Ch’un-mei, Yü-hsiao, and Hui-lien took the opportunity to make a complete tour of the premises, from front to back. They also went up to the second-story room that overlooked the street, pushed open the windows, and surveyed the scene.

Ch’en Ching-chi pressed them, saying, “It’s already late. As soon as you’ve had your look, we’d better start on our way home.”

“You crazy short-life!” protested Chin-lien. “You’re pushing us so hard:

Our arms and legs never stop moving.

What’s the rush?”

Thereupon, it was not until Ch’un-mei and the others had been called downstairs that they were ready to start. Old Mother Feng accompanied them out the door.

At this juncture Li P’ing-erh bethought herself to ask, “Where has P’ing-an gotten to?”

“He hasn’t shown up yet today,” the old woman replied. “Though it’s:

The third watch in the middle of the night,

he’ll keep me waiting up to:

Open the gates and close the doors,[18]

for him.”

“Today,” pointed out Lai-an, “P’ing-an accompanied Father to Second Master Ying’s place.”

“Old Mother,” Li P’ing-erh enjoined her, “just lock up and go to bed. Most likely he won’t even show up and you won’t have to lose any sleep. Come over to the house and report to me first thing in the morning. You’re as bad as:

The abbot of the Stone Buddha Monastery:[19]

Every time you’re asked to officiate you make excuses.”[20]

“Don’t I know who my mistress is?” the old woman exclaimed. “I’d never presume to make excuses to you.”

“Old Mother,” said Li P’ing-erh, “There’s no need for you to:

Bandy words about it.[21]

Just see that you deliver that serving girl to the Second Lady first thing in the morning.”

At the conclusion of this exchange they watched as the old woman closed the outer gate. Only then did the flock of men and women set out for home.

As they approached their own gateway they became aware of the voice of Auntie Han, the wife of Mohammedan Han, who rented a room on the street front of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s property. Her husband was on night duty with the staff of the eunuch in charge of the local Imperial Stables. While at home alone she had joined some neighbors in “walking off the hundred ailments” and returned to her dwelling in a drunken state, only to learn that late that night someone had cut his way through her front door and stolen her dog. Some other things were missing too. She was sitting right in the street engaged in a drunken tirade.

The flock of women had no sooner come to a halt than Chin-lien directed Lai-an, “You go call Auntie Han over here so we can find out what’s going on.”

Before long she was haled before them and asked, “What’s all this about?”

Auntie Han:

Neither hurriedly nor hastily,
Stepping forward and saluting them with folded hands,

bowed twice and said, “If you three ladies will be so good as to listen, I’ll tell you all about it from the beginning. There is a song to the tune ‘Playful Children’ that testifies to this:

It was an auspicious occasion in an era of great peace,
the night of the Lantern Festival,”

etc., etc.

When Yü-lou and the others had heard her out, they all reached into their sleeves and came up with some small change and holiday delicacies to give her. They then summoned Lai-an and instructed him, “Tell Master Ch’en to see that she gets home all right.”

Ch’en Ching-chi’s sole concern at the moment was to carry on a flirtation with Hui-lien, so he refused to help her on her way.

Chin-lien then directed Lai-an to see that she got home safely and instructed him, “Tell her to come to the house first thing in the morning to do the laundry. I’ll speak to your father about it and get him to take appropriate measures on her behalf.”

At this, Auntie Han returned home with:

A thousand thanks and ten thousand
expressions of gratitude.

Yü-lou and the others had barely passed beyond Auntie Han’s door when who should they see but the wife of Pen the Fourth, wearing a red jacket, a jet silk vest, and a jade-colored skirt, with her hair done up in a gold lame kerchief.

She stepped forward with a giggle and said, “Many felicitations. Where have you three ladies been on your excursion? If you see fit to do so, deign to enter my humble abode and permit me to offer you some tea.”

“We only stopped just now because of that youngster’s bawling,” said Yü-lou. “We felt obliged to ask her what was going on. Thank you for your hospitality, but it’s already late and we’d better not come in.”

“Ai-ya!” exclaimed Pen the Fourth’s wife. “You three ladies are:

Waxing supercilious before you enter the door.[22]

No doubt you find it laughable enough that such mean folk as ourselves can come up with a cup of tea.”

She dragged them into the house as though her life depended upon it. It so happened that there were representations of the Goddess Kuan-yin delivering sentient beings from the eight disasters,[23] and of His Holiness Kuan Yü, the God of War,[24] on ritual display outside the dwelling. A lantern in the shape of a snowflake was suspended over the front door. When they lifted aside the

portiere they found her thirteen-year-old daughter, Chang-chieh, inside. There were two gauze-covered lanterns standing on a dining table on which a complete complement of seasonal delicacies were arrayed.

Having offered the three ladies a seat, she hastily called Chang-chieh over to kowtow to the visitors and serve them tea. Yü-lou and Chin-lien gave her a pair of artificial flowers apiece and Li P'ing-erh pulled a handkerchief out of her sleeve and also presented her with a mace of silver to buy melon seeds with. This pleased Pen the Fourth's wife so much that she kowtowed in gratitude again and again. But she was unable to detain them any longer.

Yü-lou and the others got up and made their departure. When they arrived at the main gate of their residence the page boy, Lai-hsing, was there to greet them.

"Has your father come home or not?" Chin-lien asked him.

"Father hasn't come home yet," Lai-hsing responded.

The three ladies lingered at the gateway to watch as Ch'en Ching-chi set off three "ten-foot high chrysanthemums," a single "great smoky orchid," and a single "gold lamp on a silver stand."[25] Only then did they return to their quarters inside the compound.

Hsi-men Ch'ing did not arrive home until the fourth watch. Truly:

> Once drunk, one does not even know
> that night has fallen;
> Let the bright moon set, if it will,
> behind the western chamber.[26]

To resume our story, Ch'en Ching-chi had seized the opportunity provided by "walking off the hundred ailments" to flirt with Chin-lien and the other women all along the way. Moreover, from the manner in which he and Lai-wang's wife, Sung Hui-lien, were:

> Talking back and forth,

it was obvious that by now both of them had the same idea in mind.

The next morning, when Ching-chi had finished his ablutions, he did not report to the shop but headed straight for Wu Yüeh-niang's quarters in the rear compound. Whom should he find there but Li Chiao-erh and Chin-lien, who were seated around the bed table on

the k’ang, keeping Yüeh-niang’s sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K’ai, company. Tea had just been served. Yüeh-niang had withdrawn into her Buddhist chapel to burn incense. The young scamp stepped forward, saluted the company with a bow, and sat down.

“Son-in-law, a fine person you are!” Chin-lien said to him. “Yesterday, when you were asked to take Auntie Han home, you refused to budge, and we had to send the page boy to do the job instead. Moreover, you were constantly:

Engaging in badinage and repartee,

with that servant’s wife. Who knows what you were up to? When your mother-in-law is through burning her incense, just wait and see whether I tell her about it or not.”

“How can you say such things?” rejoined Ching-chi. “Yesterday your son very nearly:

Came down with a crick in the back.[27]

I accompanied you the whole way on your excursion and then we went to the house on Lion Street. How many li is it there and back do you suppose? I was already worn out with all the walking, and then you wanted me to take on Mohammedan Han’s wife as well. So what if you did have to get the page boy to see her home? I’d barely gotten to sleep before it was daylight again. It was all I could do to crawl out of bed this morning.”

As they were speaking, Yüeh-niang came back from her incense burning and Ching-chi made her a bow.

“What was Auntie Han doing yesterday,” Yüeh-niang demanded, “indulging in such a drunken tirade?”

“She had been out walking off the hundred ailments,’ ” Ching-chi explained, “when someone cut his way through her front door and took her dog. So she sat down right in the street, weeping and wailing and cursing away. This morning when her husband came home he gave her a good drubbing, as a result of which she isn’t up even yet.”

“It’s lucky we came along when we did and persuaded her to go inside,” said Chin-lien. “Otherwise, if Father had come home and run into her, what sort of impression would that have made?”

When they had finished speaking, Yü-lou, Li P'ing-erh, and Hsi-men Ta-chieh all went into Yüeh-niang's room to have some tea. Ching-chi also took tea with them.

Afterwards, when they went back to their quarters, Hsi-men Ta-chieh had a few things to say to Ching-chi.

"You death-defying jailbird!" she railed at him. "What were you doing:

'Engaging in badinage and repartee,'

with Lai-wang's wife? If word of any such thing were to come to Father's attention, even if that whore escaped unscathed, you'd be lucky to find a place to die in!"

That day Hsi-men Ch'ing had spent the night in Li P'ing-erh's room and was late getting up. Who should appear at this juncture but Battalion Commander Ching Chung, who had just been promoted to a concurrent position as military director-in-chief of another jurisdiction and had come to pay a courtesy call. Hsi-men Ch'ing, who had just arisen from bed, hastily combed his hair, put on his hairnet, straightened his clothes, and came out to entertain his guest in the main reception room, simultaneously dispatching P'ing-an to the rear compound to fetch some tea.

Sung Hui-lien was in the courtyard outside the master suite just then, engaged in a game of jacks with Yü-hsiao and Hsiao-yü for the privilege of spanking the loser.[28] They had been:

Horsing around till they were all in a heap.

Hsiao-yü was riding astride Yü-hsiao, who was face down on the ground, and laughing as she cursed her, saying, "You lousy whore! You've forfeited a spanking and now you won't let yourself be spanked."

She then called out to Hui-lien, "Come over here and hold on to one of the whore's legs. If she doesn't want a spanking I'll give her a poke."

Just as they were in the midst of their fun, who should appear but P'ing-an, who called out, "Sister Yü-hsiao, Old Man Ching is in the front compound and I've been sent to fetch the tea."

Yü-hsiao didn't pay any attention to him but continued her playful tussle with Hsiao-yü as though nothing had happened.

P'ing-an pressed his case, saying, "He's been sitting out there all this time already."

"You crazy jailbird!" interjected Sung Hui-lien. "If Father wants tea, go ask whomever's on duty in the kitchen for it. Why hang around here bothering us? We're only responsible back here for preparing the tea for the master suite. It's not our job to take care of the front compound."

P'ing-an accordingly went to the kitchen where the person on duty that day was Lai-pao's wife, Hui-hsiang.

"You crazy jailbird!" Hui-hsiang protested. "I've got my hands full with the cooking in here. Just go ask for two cups of tea back at the master suite. Why insist on getting your tea from me?"

"I've already been back there," said P'ing-an, "but they wouldn't give me any tea. Sister Hui-lien said, 'That's the responsibility of whoever's on duty in the kitchen. Go ask her for it.' She wouldn't do anything about it."

"That lousy slattern!" Hui-hsiang cursed. "I suppose she's made up her mind that she's to be on the staff of the master suite while I'm preordained to slave in the kitchen. I'm in the midst of preparing the food for the whole household, and I also have to stir-fry some vegetarian fare for the First Lady. How many hands do you think I've got to spare? If you think about it, all she has to do is pour out the tea, but she insists on singling me out for the job. As though I were at her beck and call! If the tea never gets served, so be it. I'm certainly not going to take care of it."

"Old Man Ching has been sitting out there all this time already," protested P'ing-an. "Sister, hurry up and give me some tea to take out to him. If you delay any further you'll bring Father's curses down on your head."

Thereupon, while:

> This place tried to foist the job on that;
> That place tried to foist the job on this,

until nothing got done for half a day. By the time P'ing-an had waited for Yü-hsiao to supply condiments and teaspoons and was finally able to bring the tea out, Director Ching had been sitting in the reception room for a long time. He tried to make his departure more than once, but Hsi-men Ch'ing would not let him go. Then the tea turned out to be so cold it was not fit to drink. Hsi-men Ch'ing roundly cursed P'ing-an and had to order him to replace the original tea before Director Ching finally drank it and went his way.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing came back inside he demanded to know, "Who was it who made the tea today?"

"It was made by the person on duty in the kitchen," said P'ing-an.

Hsi-men Ch'ing went back to Yüeh-niang's room in the master suite and complained to her, "What sort of tea was that to serve to a guest today? Go to the kitchen, find out what servant's wife is on duty, and then bring her out here for interrogation and give her a few strokes with the bamboo."

"It should be Hui-hsiang on duty today," said Hsiao-yü.

"That splay-legged whore is asking for it!" Yüeh-niang said in some consternation. "How can she continue to turn out that sort of tea?"

At the same time she sent Hsiao-yü to fetch Hui-hsiang, made her kneel down in the courtyard, and asked how many strokes she should be given.

"It was only because I was busy cooking," Hui-hsiang protested, "and had to stir-fry your vegetarian fare into the bargain, that I had my hands full and the tea got a little cold."

Yüeh-niang berated her for a while and then permitted her to get up.

"From now on," she commanded, "whenever your father has guests to entertain in the front compound, let Yü-hsiao and Hui-lien make the tea back here. Whoever is on duty in the kitchen should only be responsible for preparing the food and tea for the household as a whole."

When Hui-hsiang returned to the kitchen she was:

> Unable to contain her chagrin.[29]

She only waited until Hsi-men Ch'ing had left the premises before coming back in a rage to seek out Hui-lien. Pointing her finger at her, she launched into a tirade of abuse.

"You lousy whore! I hope you're satisfied, that's all. I suppose you're preordained to be in favor and serve on the staff of the master suite while I'm just to be a woman who slaves in the kitchen. You insisted on the page boy's singling me out to make the tea. As though I were at your beck and call! As for you and me:

The rice is already cooked.[30]
You know it and I know it.[31]
The cricket won't eat the flesh of a warty toad,
Because both inhabit the same spadeful of earth.[32]

In any case, if you're not Father's concubine, that's all there is to it; and even if you are his concubine, I'm not afraid of you."

"You're completely off the mark," retorted Hui-lien. "If you didn't make the tea right and Father took exception to it, what's that got to do with me? How dare you come here and vent your spleen on me?"

When Hui-hsiang heard these words she became more enraged than ever and railed at her, "You lousy whore! How is it that when you did your best to get me a caning just now I wasn't ordered to be beaten after all? When you were working for the Ts'ai family, the lovers you took couldn't be counted, and now that you're here, you're still up to your old tricks."

"If I've taken a lover, you've never seen it," replied Hui-lien. "Don't talk such stinking rot. And as for you, Sister, you're not exactly:

An immaculate nun,[33]

yourself."

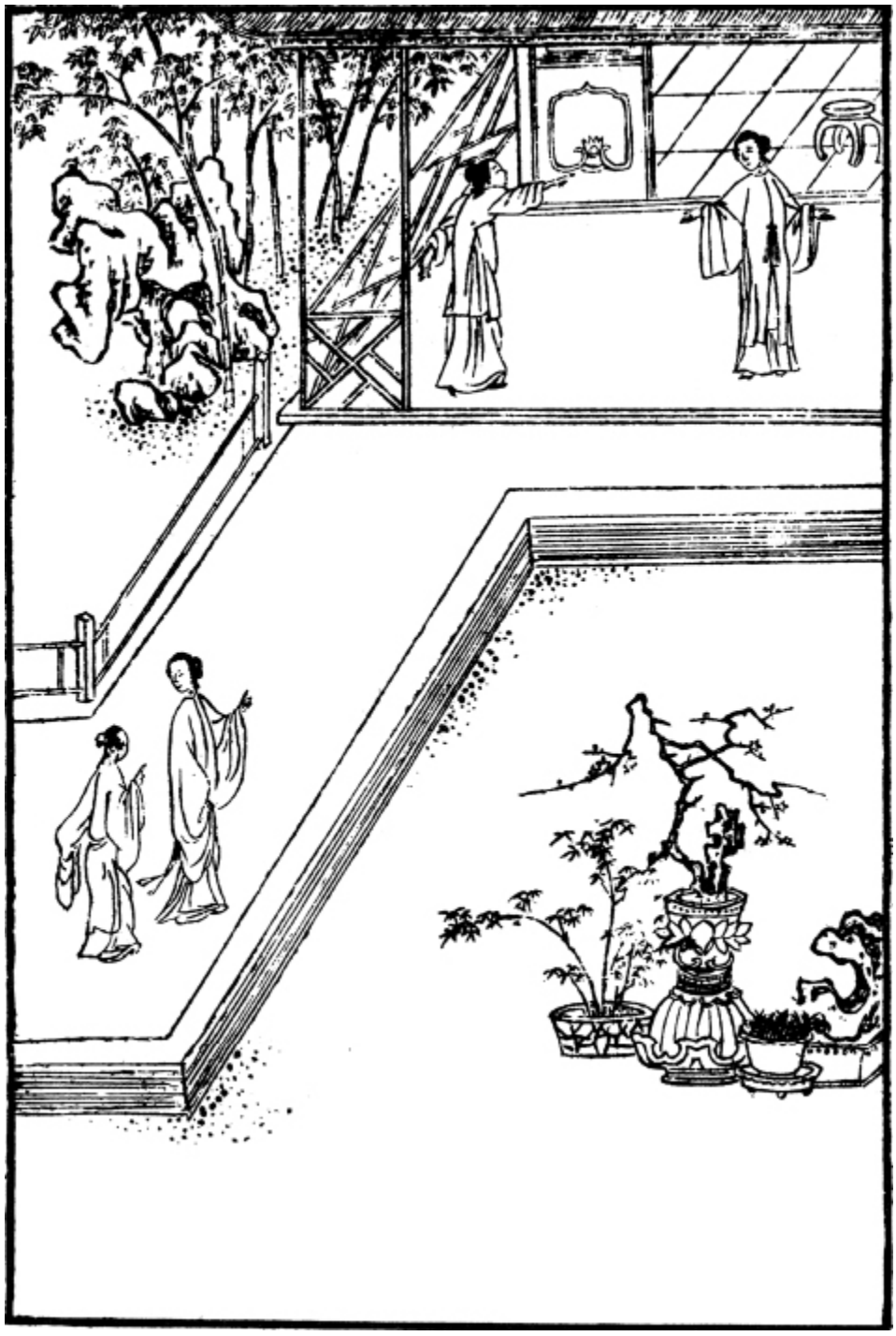
"Who says I'm not an immaculate nun?" retorted Hui-hsiang. "And if I chose to put my legs in the air, I'd do a better job of it than any whore like you, I can tell you. I didn't choose to start this tale-telling, but where men are concerned:

If you've had one, you've had a bushelful.[34]

There isn't a man out at the front of the compound you haven't been after. You may think nobody knows what you're up to behind their

backs. The way you talk when you think you're safe, even the ladies of the house mean nothing to you, let alone their inferiors."

"What have I said behind anyone's back?" demanded Hui-lien. "And who means nothing to me? You can give me as hard a time as you like. I'm not afraid of you."



"You've got someone to stand up for you," replied Hui-hsiang. "That's why you're not afraid."

The two of them were still mixing it up when Hsiao-yü fetched Yüeh-niang, who ordered them apart. "You lousy little stinkers! Why don't you go about your business? What are you mixing it up over, anyway? If your master gets wind of it there'll be another ruckus for sure. The last time there was no caning administered, but if you carry on any longer there will be."

"If I get a single stroke," said Hui-lien, "I'll hook that whore's guts out right through her mouth before I'm ready to call it quits! I'll put my life up against yours any day; what's it to me, even if we both have to leave the house?"

So saying, she marched off to the front compound.

After this, Sung Hui-lien's conduct became more outrageous than ever. Relying on her clandestine affair with Hsi-men Ch'ing, she:

Took no further account,[35]

of anyone in the household, high or low. Every day she could be found hobnobbing with Yü-lou, Chin-lien, Li P'ing-erh, Hsi-men Ta-chieh, and Ch'un-mei in their daily pastimes.

That same day Old Mother Feng brought over the twelve-year-old serving girl, as she had promised. She took her to Li P'ing-erh's quarters first, to be looked over, and then escorted her to Li Chiao-erh's place. Li Chiao-erh bought her for five taels of silver in order to serve in her apartment. But no more of this.

Truly:

The plum blossom licentiously displays its
springtide feelings;
Undaunted by the threat of Aunt Feng's[36]
stern commands.[37]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Outside the palace a craze for hunting,
inside a craze for sex;[38]

If one dabbles a bit in such things,
what's the harm in it?
In the morning he rides forth
upon an embossed saddle;
At nightfall he returns
to scent of rouge and powder.[39]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 25

HSÜEH-O SECRETLY DIVULGES THE LOVE AFFAIR; LAI-WANG DRUNKENLY VILIFIES HSI-MEN CH'ING

Amid terraces and kiosks of prominent houses
a myriad blossoms bloom;
Manipulating the ropes of their swings
girls vie voluptuously.
The morning sun lends added warmth
to their new brocades;
The spring breeze gusts congenially
across old gates and walls.
By jade flagstones orchid shoots may grow,
in many a beauteous pair;
But crimson bed curtains should enclose
a single preferred spray.
How laughable that the domestic doe should
breed domestic doom;
The women's quarters, from this time on,
know no behavioral norms.

THE STORY GOES that:

The Lantern Festival having passed,
The Ch'ing-ming Festival[1] was at hand.

Ying Po-chüeh called on Hsi-men Ch'ing that morning to extend an invitation and found him already entertaining Ch'ang Shih-chieh at

breakfast in the summerhouse in the garden. They looked on as a considerable number of silversmiths who had been called in for the purpose plied their trade in front of them. Sun Kua-tsui had offered to stand treat and had invited them all to join him in a festive excursion to the suburbs.

Before this Wu Yüeh-niang had already had the frame for a swing constructed in the garden. Now that Hsi-men Ch'ing was not at home and the ladies were at leisure, she led her sisters into the garden to try it out and thus dispel the ennui of the spring day.

Yüeh-niang and Meng Yü-lou were the first to sit down on the swing and try it together. After they had enjoyed it for a while they got off and suggested that Li Chiao-erh and P'an Chin-lien take their places. Li Chiao-erh begged off on the grounds that she was too heavy to work the swing and suggested that Li P'ing-erh should take a turn with Chin-lien.

After they had swung for a while, Yü-lou called out, "Sister Six, how about joining me in doing a standing swing? Don't anybody laugh. Just see how we do."

Thereupon, the two women:

> Grasping the gaudy ropes with their jade hands,
> Stood themselves erect upon the painted board.

Yüeh-niang told Sung Hui-lien to stand underneath to push the swing for them and she was joined in this task by Ch'un-mei. Truly, it is a case of:

Red-rouged powdered face facing
  red-rouged powdered face;
Jade-white creamy shoulders next to
  jade-white creamy shoulders.
Two pairs of jadelike wrists
  tug and then retug;
Four tiny golden lotuses are
  tossed and then retossed.[2]

Chin-lien, who was the uppermost of the pair, was:

Falling into a heap with laughter.

"Sister Six," Yüeh-niang called out to her. "There's nothing wrong with your laughing so hard up there, but if you were to slip and fall:

It would be no laughing matter."[3]

As she spoke, who could have anticipated it, but the painted board was slippery and it was hard to maintain a steady footing on it in high-heeled shoes. All they heard was a clattering sound, and Chin-lien came tumbling off the swing. Fortunately she managed to catch hold of the frame and save herself from a severe fall, but she nearly dragged Yü-lou off with her.

"I warned you not to laugh so hard, Sister Six," said Yüeh-niang. "It serves you right to have fallen off."

Then she turned to Li Chiao-erh and the others and continued, "The one thing not to do when swinging is to laugh. What's the point of laughing too hard, anyway? Your legs are sure to go soft on you and off you fall. Back when I was still a girl in my own home, the family of Censor Chou next door had a garden in which they had set up a swing. It was just like this on a day during the festival season in the third month that their daughter, Miss Chou, along with three or four of us other girls, were playing on the swing. We too were laughing uncontrollably, and Miss Chou slipped off and landed astride the painted board, which ruptured her hymen. Later, when she got married, the groom's family claimed she was not a virgin, repudiated the match, and sent her back to her family. From now on, when you swing, avoid laughing above all else."

"Meng the Third isn't up to snuff," said Chin-lien. "Let me and Li P'ing-erh do a standing swing together."

"The two of you be careful now," said Yüeh-niang.

She ordered Yü-hsiao and Ch'un-mei to stand to their right in order to push the swing for them.

Just as they were about to start, who should come in from outside but Ch'en Ching-chi, who said, "So you ladies are in here playing on the swing, are you?"

"Son-in-law, you've arrived in the nick of time," said Yüeh-niang. "You can push the swing for the two ladies. The maidservants aren't

strong enough to do it properly."

As for Ching-chi, it was just like the time:

When the old monk neglected to ring the bell:[4]
This was just the signal he'd been waiting for.

Thereupon,

Quickening his pace and hiking up his clothes,

he stepped forward and said, "Let me push the swing for the two ladies."

Then, pausing to tuck Chin-lien's skirt in place, he said, "Steady on your feet, Fifth Lady. Your son-in-law will give you a push."

The swing flew up into the air, so that they looked just like a pair of immortals in flight.[5]

When she saw how high the swing was going, Li P'ing-erh called out apprehensively, "It's not straight. Son-in-law, you'd better give me a push too."

Somewhat flustered, Ch'en Ching-chi replied, "Don't be so demanding. If you let me take my own time I can manage you both. If you go on at this rate, first one of you calling for me and then the other, it will bring on a case of consumption, and I won't have the stamina to do the job."

Thereupon, he proceeded to adjust the bottom of Li P'ing-erh's skirt, exposing the extremities of her scarlet underdrawers, as he gathered it into a bunch.

"Son-in-law," Li P'ing-erh said, "Take it easy. My legs are going soft on me."

"You shouldn't call for more if you're not up to serious drinking," said Ching-chi. "Only a moment ago you were making such a fuss my head was spinning."

"Sister Li, you're stepping on my skirt," complained Chin-lien. "It's a wonder you haven't pushed me right off the swing."

The two of them continued to swing for some time and then stepped down.

Ch'un-mei and Hsi-men Ta-chieh then took a turn.



Ladies Enjoy the Swing on a Spring Day

Finally, Yü-hsiao and Sung Hui-lien were induced to try a standing swing together. Hui-lien grasped the gaudy ropes with her hands, stood straight up with her feet firmly planted on the painted

board below, and without asking anyone to give her a push caused the swing to soar up into the clouds, and then suddenly fly down again. Truly, they were just like a pair of immortals in flight, a captivating sight.

When Yüeh-niang saw this, she said to Meng Yü-lou and Li P'ing-erh, "Just look! That chambermaid can really swing."

As she spoke, a gust of wind caught Hui-lien's skirt, exposing her scarlet underdrawers of Lu-chou silk, tucked into sand-green leggings, adorned with fine variegated silk embroidered kneepads, the ends of which were tied in place with pink cord.

Yü-lou pointed this out to Yüeh-niang, but she only laughed, cursed, "What a lousy preternatural creature," and let it go at that.

Yüeh-niang and the others continued to enjoy their swinging. But no more of this.

At this point the story divides into two. Let us now return to the story of Lai-wang, who had gone to Hang-chou to arrange the manufacture of the garments for presentation to Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching on the occasion of his birthday. He had now returned, in charge of numerous saddlebags and trunks full of valuables. Leaving his cargo at the dock, he went ahead in order to announce his arrival.

When he reached the gate, he tied up his horse and went inside, dusted himself off, stowed away his gear, and headed for the rear compound. The first person he saw was Sun Hsüeh-o, who was standing in the doorway of the master suite.

He made her a bow and Hsüeh-o greeted him, all smiles, saying, "Good. You've come home. You must be tired from:

The wind and the frost on your journey.[6]

It's not that long since I've seen you, but you've gotten swarthier and put on weight."

Lai-wang then asked, "Where are the master and mistress?"

"Your father has been invited by Ying the Second and that bunch to join them in an excursion outside the South Gate," said Hsüeh-o. "Your mother and Hsi-men Ta-chieh are in the flower garden playing on the swing."

“Ai-ya!” said Lai-wang. “What do they want to do that for? Swinging is a pastime introduced by the northern barbarians.[7] Southerners don’t do it. The women there, in the third month of spring, merely amuse themselves by comparing botanical specimens.”

Hsüeh-o then went into the kitchen and poured out a cup of tea for him, asking as she did so, “Have you eaten or not?”

“I don’t want anything to eat right now,” said Lai-wang. “As soon as I’ve seen the mistress, I’ll go back to my room and wash up.”

Then he went on to ask, “How come I don’t see my wife around the kitchen?”

Hsüeh-o gave a sardonic laugh, and said, “Your wife is no longer your wife of old. She’s risen to quite another plane. Nowadays she spends all her time palling around with the ladies of the household, playing at board games with them, or jacks, or dominoes. She scarcely condescends to do any work in the kitchen.”

While they were talking, Hsiao-yü had gone into the garden to report to Yüeh-niang, saying, “Lai-wang’s here.”

Yüeh-niang came back from the front of the compound and sat down. Lai-wang stepped forward and kowtowed to her, after which he stood to one side. She asked him about the events of his journey and rewarded him with the gift of two bottles of wine.

After a while his wife, Sung Hui-lien, showed up and Yüeh-niang said, “That’s enough for now. You must be tired. Go back to your room and wash up and have a rest, so you’ll be ready to report to your father when he gets home.”

Lai-wang then went back to his room. Hui-lien handed him the key and he opened the door. She dipped up some water for him to wash his face and clean up with and brought in his bag.

“You lousy black jailbird!” she said. “It’s not that long since I’ve seen you, but you’ve certainly put on a lot of weight.”

She helped him change his clothes and fixed something for him to eat. He took a nap, and by the time he got up it was already sunset.

When Hsi-men Ch’ing arrived home, Lai-wang came to see him and reported, “The garments for presentation to Grand Preceptor

Ts’ai Ching on his birthday, and the clothes for the family, have all been successfully procured in Hang-chou. They have been packed in four trunks and transported on a government boat. All that remains is to hire bearers and see them through customs.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing was utterly delighted and gave him the silver to pay the bearers. The next morning Lai-wang arranged to have the trunks carried into the city, had them properly stowed away, and settled accounts with his master. Hsi-men Ch’ing rewarded him with five taels of silver for his personal use and continued to employ him, as before, as a purchasing agent for the household.

Lai-wang had done some business of his own on the side and surreptitiously presented Sun Hsüeh-o with two satin handkerchiefs, two pairs of figured ankle leggings, four boxes of Hang-chou powder, and twenty cakes of rouge.

Hsüeh-o secretly confided to him, “Ever since you went away, during the last four months or so, your wife has been carrying on an affair with Hsi-men Ch’ing. It all started with Yü-hsiao playing the role of pander and delivering a gift of silk. They’ve used Chin-lien’s quarters as their nest, meeting at first in the grotto underneath the artificial hill in the garden, and then, later, actually going to it in her room. They’re at it all day long:

> Sleeping from morning to night,
> And then from night to morning.[8]

He gives her clothing and jewelry, trinkets and silver, which she carries around with her in a big bag. She gets the page boys to buy things for her at the front gate at the rate of two or three mace of silver per day.”

“No wonder,” said Lai-wang, “her trunk is full of clothing and jewelry. When I asked her about it, she said the mistress had given them to her.”

“It’s not your mother that gave them to her,” said Hsüeh-o. “It’s your father who gave them to her.”

Lai-wang made a mental note of what she had said.

That night, he went into the rear compound and had a few cups to drink. When he returned to his room, as the saying goes:

Wine releases the words stored in the gut.

On opening her trunk and coming across a bolt of blue silk of unusually fine design, he asked his wife, “Where’d this silk come from? Who gave it to you? Tell me the truth immediately.”

His wife:

Not understanding the true state of affairs,[9]

put on a smile and replied, “You crazy louse of a jailbird! What are you asking about that for? It’s just a bolt of silk that the mistress in the rear compound gave me when she saw I didn’t have a proper jacket to wear. I put it away in the trunk and haven’t had time to make it up yet. Really, who do you think would give me such a thing?”

“You lousy whore!” Lai-wang cursed. “You think you can still fool me with such tricks, do you? Who was it who really gave it to you?”

“And where did this jewelry come from?” he went on to ask.

“Phooey!” the woman replied. “You crazy jailbird! Who doesn’t have a mother and father?

Even if you sprung from a crack in a rock,
you’d have a nest.
Even if you were born from a date stone,
you’d have a pit.
Even if you were sired by a clay figurine,
it must have been animate.
Even if you were begotten by a stone tablet,
you’d still have a base.

How can anyone who is human lack relatives or relations? These hairpins and combs were lent to me by my maternal aunt. Who do you suppose gave them to me? How can you be so:

Barefaced and red-eyed?[10]

You’ll be seeing things till the day you die, you jailbird!”

At this point Lai-wang gave her a blow with his fist that nearly knocked her off her feet.

“You lousy whore! Still shooting off your mouth, are you? I know someone who’s actually seen you engaging in hanky-panky with

that degenerate pig or dog. I know all about how that maidservant Yü-hsiao played the role of pander and delivered a gift of silk to you; how the two of you made out together in the front garden; how, later on, you moved the scene of operations into that whore P'an's room where you could carry on openly; and how you keep it up all day long till you're fucked out. You lousy whore! And you have the nerve to come around me with all that highfalutin talk!"

The woman then broke into tears, saying, "You'll come to a bad end, you lousy jailbird! What do you think you're doing, coming home and beating me up? What business of yours have I ruined?

Those may be words but they don't make utterances.[11]
If you throw a brick or a tile into the air,
It's got to come down to earth.

Some backbiting:

Bad-mouthed and evil-tongued,[12]

person, bent on:

Making something out of nothing,

must have put you up to abusing your old lady. Well your old lady's not the sort of unbacked commodity to be trifled with.

Even if you abuse a person to death,
You'd better have clear-cut grounds.

Who says so, anyway? If you don't believe me, just ask around a bit about that Sung girl. If I've slipped up in any way, you might as well turn my name Sung on its head. Would I dare open my mouth to accuse anyone else of anything? That whore and that cuckold have the nerve to bad-mouth me, do they? And as for you, you lousy jailbird:

Before you even get wind of anything,
You're ready for the rain.[13]
The only thing that ought to matter is the truth.[14]

If someone told you to kill a person, I suppose you'd just kill him."

With these few words, Lai-wang was reduced to silence.

After some time, he said, "It's not that I intended to beat you. It's just that

I've allowed that bastard to get the better of me."

"As for that bolt of blue silk," Hui-lien continued, "I might as well tell you all about it. It was during the eleventh month last year, on the Third Lady's birthday, that the mistress noticed I was wearing a violet jacket along with a skirt I had borrowed from Yü-hsiao that didn't match. 'That's most unbecoming,' she said. 'What a way to dress! It won't do.' It was on that occasion that she gave me this bolt of silk. But who's had the time to make it up? Someone who didn't know the facts must have made up this tale about me. But they don't know who they've got to contend with. Your old lady's not the sort to let anyone off easy. Tomorrow I'll give them a sample of what I can do in the way of a good cursing out. I might as well put my life on the line since nobody's willing to stick up for me."

"As long as you haven't done anything, forget it," said Lai-wang. "Why pick a quarrel with anyone for no good reason? Just make up the bed for me, and be quick about it, so I can get some sleep."

As the woman unfolded his bedding, she muttered, "You'll drop dead in your tracks someday, you crazy jailbird! Once you've had your snootful of that 'saffron soup,'[15] you just sack out and enjoy yourself, leaving your old lady to curse you to your fucking face for nothing."

Thereupon, by the time she had turned Lai-wang over on the k'ang, with his face to the wall, he was:

Snoring thunderously.

Gentle reader take note: Most of the adulterous women of this world, no matter how smart their husbands are, even if they are tough enough to chew nails, can get around them with a few phrases that:

Misstate wrong as right,[16]

so effectively that nine out of ten of them are deceived. Truly:

Like the bricks in the privy:
They're both hard and smelly.[17]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Hui-lien's illicit affair enables her to
monopolize her master;
Lai-wang, while in a state of drunkenness,
abuses his wife.
Hsüeh-o secretly divulges Chin-lien's share
in arranging the tryst;
Thereby giving rise to open hostilities
in the bosom of the family.

Sung Hui-lien succeeded in placating Lai-wang, and the night passed without further event.

The next day she went to the rear compound and interrogated Yü-hsiao as to who had given the game away but did not succeed in finding out anything. All she could do was to utter an indiscriminate tirade, but Hsüeh-o did not acknowledge her guilt.

One day, the impending catastrophe occurred in the following way. Yüeh-niang sent Hsiao-yü to fetch Hsüeh-o, and she looked all over without being able to find her. As she was going past Lai-wang's door in the course of her search, she saw Hsüeh-o coming out of his room and assumed that she must have been talking to his wife. But who would have thought that when she returned to the kitchen she found Hui-lien there engaged in cutting meat?

Some time later, Hsi-men Ch'ing was in the front compound engaged in a parley with Ch'iao Hung, his neighbor from across the street, who asked him to intervene on behalf of the Yang-chou salt merchant, Wang Ssu-feng, who had been incarcerated in Ts'ang-chou by the military commissioner and was willing to promise him two thousand taels of silver if he would ask Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching to have him released as a personal favor. As soon as he had finished with Ch'iao Hung, Hsi-men Ch'ing called for Lai-wang, and he was seen to come running out of his room. Truly:

Concealed by the snow, the presence of the egrets
is not seen until they fly;
Hidden by the willows, the existence of the parrots
is not known until they speak.

As a result of this, everyone knew that Hsüeh-o had been engaging in hanky-panky with Lai-wang.

One day Lai-wang got drunk and started angrily railing against Hsi-men Ch'ing in the presence of the servants and page boys in the front compound.

"I know all about it," he said. "When I was away from home he went after my wife. He sent Yü-hsiao to her room with a bolt of blue silk as an inducement and contrived to get her into the garden so he could have his way with her. And I know how, later on, they set it up so they could:

Sleep together all night long,

and how P'an Chin-lien provided cover for them. Well, so much for that. But he'd better not fall into my hands, that's all I can say, or it'll be a case of:

A white blade going in, and
A red blade coming out.[18]

For better or for worse, I might as well kill that whore named P'an into the bargain. After all, I've only got one life to lose. You just watch and see:

What I can say,
I can do.[19]

Come to think of it, when that whore named P'an was still in her own house, she killed off her first husband, Wu the Elder. And when her brother-in-law Wu Sung came back and lodged a complaint against her, who was it she had to thank for going off to the Eastern Capital to fix things up for her and getting Wu Sung condemned to military exile? Now that she's got:

Both feet on level ground again,

you'd think she'd be content to enjoy it, but instead she encourages my wife to commit adultery. My enmity for her is as big as the sky. As the saying goes, one must either:

Refuse to do something;
Or not stop at anything.

If they cross my path again, they'll have me to reckon with.

If you’re willing to risk death by slow slicing,
You can afford to tackle the emperor himself.”



Lai-wang Drunkenly Vilifies Hsi-men Ch’ing

Lai-wang was completely oblivious to the fact that:

Even if you only talk along the road,
There may be someone lurking in the grass.

It did not occur to him that every word he said would be overheard by his fellow servant Lai-hsing.

Now this Lai-hsing was originally a native of Kan-chou, in the far northwest, who had been brought back as a servant by Hsi-men Ch'ing's father, Hsi-men Ta, after he made a trip there to engage in the woolen trade. As a consequence, his name had been changed to Kan Lai-hsing. Twelve or thirteen years had gone by since then, and he had married and had children. Hsi-men Ch'ing customarily employed him as a purchasing agent for the foodstuff required by the household, a lucrative position. Recently, on account of his affair with Lai-wang's wife, Sung Hui-lien, Hsi-men Ch'ing had taken the job of purchasing agent away from him and given it to Lai-wang. As a result, Lai-hsing was on bad terms with Lai-wang, and a deadly enmity had grown up between the two men. On hearing these words of Lai-wang's, his:

Sense of grievance and desire for revenge,[20]

could not help being activated.

Thereupon, he set out for P'an Chin-lien's quarters to tell her what he had heard. Chin-lien was sitting with Meng Yü-lou at the time.

On seeing Lai-hsing lift aside the portiere and come in, Chin-lien asked him, "What have you come for? Whose place has your father gone off drinking to today?"

"Today," said Lai-hsing, "Father and Ying the Second have gone outside the South Gate to attend a funeral. Right now, there is something I want to tell you about. But you must keep it to yourself. Don't tell anyone I told you."

"What is it?" asked Chin-lien. "Go ahead and speak. It doesn't matter."

"It's nothing but this," said Lai-hsing. "It's really intolerable. Lai-wang went out somewhere and got stinking drunk yesterday. Then he spent the rest of the day cursing in the front compound:

Making all kinds of threatening noises,
Pointing at the pig but cursing the dog.

He even tried to pick a fight with me, but I kept out of his way and paid no attention. Right in front of the whole household, high and low, he cursed Father and you."

"The lousy jailbird!" said Chin-lien. "What did he say about me?"

"I hardly dare tell you," said Lai-hsing. "The Third Lady is here; it's not as though she were anyone else. That rascal said that Father had deliberately gotten him out of the way so he could go after his wife; that he had sent Yü-hsiao to her room with the gift of a bolt of silk (she could testify to the truth of this allegation); that you had provided cover for them and inveigled his wife into your room where they made out together:

Sleeping from morning to night,
And then from night to morning.

He's had a knife made for himself and threatens to kill Father and you, saying it would be a case of:

A white blade going in, and
A red blade coming out.

He also said that back when you were still in your own house you had poisoned your husband, and that you had him to thank for going off to the Eastern Capital to fix things up for you, thereby saving your life. He said that you were now:

Requiting kindness with enmity,[21]

by encouraging his wife to commit adultery.

"As far as I'm concerned:

If you don the black livery of a servant,
You must cling to even the blackest post.[22]

If I didn't come and warn you, sooner or later, that rascal might do you in."

When Meng Yü-lou heard Lai-hsing's story it was:

Just as though she had been dunked in a
tub of ice water.

She was quite dumbfounded. As for Chin-lien, nothing might have happened if she had not heard about this, but having heard these words:

Her powdered face became suffused with red;[23]
Her silver teeth were ground to smithereens.

"That criminal slave!" she cursed. "I've had:

No grudge against him in the past,
No enmity against him in the present.[24]

If his master saw fit to play around with his wife, why should I be dragged into it? If I permit that slave to remain in Hsi-men Ch'ing's household, I might as well not be his wife. So he thinks I owe my life to him, does he?"

Then she instructed Lai-hsing, "You can go, for now. When your father comes home, if he should ask you about this, be sure you tell him just what you told me."

"How can you talk that way?" said Lai-hsing. "It's not as though I'm traducing him, or anything.

If I've got a sentence,
I'll say that sentence.[25]

No matter what Father asks me, I'll tell it the same way."

When he had finished speaking, Lai-hsing went back to the front compound.

Meng Yü-lou then asked Chin-lien, "Is it really true that Father could have done such a thing?"

"What's the point of asking anything about that shameless good-for-nothing?" exclaimed Chin-lien. "A fine woman she is! No wonder he finds himself in a position to be threatened by a slave. She was formerly employed in another household, where she underwent a full:

Nine calcinations and eighteen firings,

as a slave of a whore at her master's hands. Originally, when she was at Assistant Prefect Ts'ai's place, she got caught colluding with her mistress in a case of adultery, as a result of which she had to

leave and marry the cook Chiang Ts'ung. When she catches sight of a man, she can't help waving her hand.

If she's had one, she's had a bushelful.

There isn't much she doesn't know about anything.

"That lousy ruffian of ours:

Deceiving spirits and stupefying demons,

did send Yü-hsiao to her with a gift of silk to make a jacket out of. If I know her, if she ever has the guts to wear it in public, I'll call her a real lady.

"It all happened last winter. I meant to tell you about it at the time but never got around to it. It was on that day when our elder sister had gone to a birthday party at our neighbor Ch'iao Hung's place. You remember, we were all in the front compound playing a board game when a maidservant came in and said that Father had come home, so the party broke up.

"Later, as I came through the inner gate on my way to the rear compound, I saw Hsiao-yü standing in the veranda. When I asked her if Father was inside, she made a negative gesture with her hand. When I retraced my steps as far as the garden, I ran into that little bitch, Yü-hsiao, standing at the postern gate. It so happens that she was acting as a lookout for the two of them, but I hadn't caught on yet. When I tried to go into the garden she barred my way and wouldn't let me proceed, saying that Father was inside. I gave her a piece of my mind, saying, 'You lousy little bitch! Since when have I been afraid of your father?' It was then I began to suspect he was up to some funny business with her. Who would have thought that when I went inside I found the two of them going at it in the grotto underneath the artificial hill. When the woman saw me come in, her face turned crimson with embarrassment and she beat a hasty retreat. When Father saw me he was quite at a loss for words, and I told him off for being such a shameless creature.

"Afterwards that woman came to my room and groveled around on her knees, begging me not to tell Mother about it. Later on, in the first month, Father wanted me to put that whore up in my own quarters so he could spend the night with her there, but both Ch'un-

mei and I gave him a real talking to. Since when have we ever abetted him in getting so much as a glimpse of her shadow? That lousy death-defying slave! Don't you try to drag me into it. You say I put them up to it, do you? That slave of a whore with her simpering ways! As though I'd let them get up to their dirty tricks in my own room! And even if I hadn't raised any objections, that little piece Ch'un-mei of mine would never have consented to such a thing."

"No wonder," said Yü-lou, "the lousy little stinker's been putting on such airs. When I find her sitting anywhere, she makes as though she's going to stand up, but doesn't do it. Who could have known she was up to such tricks behind our backs?

"If you stop to consider it, Father really oughtn't to play around with her. After all, it's not as though there aren't any other women to be had. If you give your slave an excuse to raise a rumpus about it outside, what does it look like? It won't sound any too good when it gets abroad."

"The fact is," said Chin-lien, "left or right:

He doesn't have his own boots on straight.

You play around with the wife of a slave, and the slave seduces your own concubine behind your back. You only end up taking turns in your skulduggery. That slavey of a concubine is forever telling tales. She's done it a thousand times, if not ten thousand times. Right now, even if I give her a slap on the mouth, she won't be able to say anything."

"Do you think we'd better tell Father about this," Yü-lou asked Chin-lien, "or not tell him about it? Our elder sister isn't likely to do anything. If that rascal really means what he says, and we don't say anything about it, and Father doesn't know what's going on, he could end up falling prey to him someday. Truly:

When the mindful plot against the unmindful,
How can the unprepared cope with the prepared?[26]

Sister Six, you really ought to say something about it. Truly:

You may break off a switch to beat the donkey,
So long as you don't injure the redbud tree."[27]

“I wouldn’t let that slave get away with anything,” said Chin-lien, “even if he had begotten me!”

Truly:

If you do nothing in your lifetime to make people
raise their eyebrows;
There should be no one in the world prepared to
gnash his teeth at you.[28]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Lai-wang, while in his cups, recklessly
vilifies his master;
Lai-hsing, harboring resentment, stirs up
the wind and waves.
Chin-lien, upon hearing the truth about
herself revealed,
Grinds her silver teeth to smithereens,[29]
in a fit of rage.

That evening, when Hsi-men Ch’ing came home, he found Chin-lien in her room with her:

Cloudy locks in disarray, and her
Fragrant cheeks wrinkled from sleep,

while her eyes were bleary with weeping. When he asked the reason for this, she told him all about Lai-wang’s drunken tirade and his threats to kill his master.

“Now there’s Lai-hsing,” she said, “who personally heard him cursing you, one day, and uttering these threats against you. If you stop to think about it, while you were plotting to seduce his wife behind his back, he simply turned around and took your own concubine behind your back.

You don’t have your own boots on straight.

If that rascal should kill you, it would only serve you right. But what’s it got to do with me, that he should want to kill me into the bargain? If you don’t do something about it right away, some night, sooner or later, since:

Men don't have eyes in the backs of their heads,[30]
I fear he may get the better of us."

"Who's been engaging in hanky-panky with that rascal?" Hsi-men Ch'ing demanded to know.

"There's no need to ask me," said Chin-lien. "Just ask Hsiao-yü in the master suite and you'll find out."

"It's not the first time that slave has taken liberties with me," she went on.
"He said that to begin with I had poisoned my husband, and that after you married me it was only thanks to his efforts that my life had been saved. He's been out making these allegations in front of people. It's a good thing I haven't:

Produced a son, or
Borne a daughter.

If I had:

Produced a son, or
Borne a daughter,

that lousy slave's allegations wouldn't bear listening to. He'd say things like, 'Originally, before your mother established her position in the household, it was only thanks to your father's string-pulling that her life was saved.' Such allegations would not redound to your credit. You may be devoid of shame, but I won't stand for it. What would I want to go on living for?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing, heeding:

The words of his spouse,[31]

went to the front of the compound, sought out Lai-hsing, found a place where they could be alone, and interrogated him about the whole incident, from beginning to end. The servant gave him a word for word account of the affair. Then he went to the rear compound and took Hsiao-yü's testimony, which did not conflict with what Chin-lien had said.

"It's true," she said, "that on such and such a day I saw Hsüeh-o coming out of Lai-wang's room when his wife was not there. That's really what happened."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was enraged and gave Sun Hsüeh-o a beating. It was only after repeated intercessions by Yüeh-niang that he stopped, but he ordered that all her jewelry and finery should be taken away, and that she should henceforth only be allowed to work in the kitchen along with the servants' wives and no longer be permitted to appear in society. Now that this matter has been explained, we will say no more about it.

Hsi-men Ch'ing subsequently sent Yü-hsiao to call Sung Hui-lien into the rear compound and privately interrogated her.

"Ai-ya, Father!" the woman protested. "Needless to say, he never said any such thing. I'd be ready to swear an oath to that effect on his behalf. He may have had a cup or two too many to drink, but he would hardly have the:

Seven heads and eight galls,

to curse you that way behind your back. If he should:

Live off King Chou's largesse,
And yet call King Chou a villain,[32]

on whom could he depend to make a living?

"Father, you shouldn't be so ready to believe what people say. Just let me ask you, who did you hear this story from, anyway?"

This speech of the woman's had the effect of reducing Hsi-men Ch'ing to silence. When pressed for an answer, he replied, "It was Lai-hsing who told me about it. He said he'd been getting drunk every day and, according to the wind-borne words' he had heard, he'd been going around outside cursing me."

"Lai-hsing," retorted Hui-lien, "because you gave the job of purchasing agent to this guy of mine, has been saying we took it away from him, depriving him of the opportunity to make any more money out of it. On account of this grudge against my husband, he's made up this story out of whole cloth and spit this mouthful of blood on him. And you fell for it. Was there ever such an injustice? But I'm not going to let him get away with it.

"Father, do as I say. Don't keep my husband around at home any more. When he's here he only gets into trouble. Give him a few taels

of silver as capital and send him out to engage in trade somewhere where he can be:

Free as he pleases,[33]
Far away from home.[34]

Don't keep him around here where he's got time on his hands. It has always been true that:

A full stomach and warm body give rise to disorder;
Hunger and cold conduce to thoughts of thievery.[35]

How could he not get up to mischief? If he were not around, but out on the road somewhere, it would be a lot more convenient whenever you had anything to say to me."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this he was utterly delighted and said, "My child, what you say is true enough. I had originally intended to send him to the Eastern Capital in charge of the birthday gifts for Grand Preceptor Ts'ai, but since he just returned from a trip to Hang-chou I felt it wouldn't be right to send him on another mission so soon and decided to send Lai-pao instead. After what you've told me, I'll send him off in the next few days after all. When he gets back, I'll consign a thousand taels of silver to him and send him off with a manager to Hang-chou to engage in the silk trade. How would you feel about that?"

The woman was delighted by this, and said, "Father, if you only do that, it would be great. Don't keep him around at home anymore. The best thing you can do with him is to:

Keep the horse to a steady pace."[36]

As she spoke, Hsi-men Ch'ing noticed that there was no one about, pulled her over, and gave her a kiss. The woman responded by sticking her tongue into his mouth, and the two of them fell to sucking each other's tongues.

"Father," the woman said, "you promised you were going to have a proper fret made up for my hair. How come you haven't had it made yet? If I'm not to wear it now, when am I to wear it? I suppose I'll have to keep on wearing this excuse of a hairpiece from one day to the next."

“That’s no problem,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “I’ll send eight taels of silver over to the silversmith’s tomorrow so he can pull it into wire for you.”

“I’m afraid your mother may ask about it,” Hsi-men Ch’ing went on to say. “How will you reply?”

“That’s no problem,” the woman said. “I’ll have a story ready for her. I’ll just say I borrowed it from my aunt’s place to wear for a while. What is there to be afraid of?”

The two of them talked together for some time and then went their separate ways.

The next day Hsi-men Ch’ing sat down in the reception hall and summoned Lai-wang into his presence.

“Get your clothes and your gear together,” he said. “The day after tomorrow, the twenty-eighth day of the third month, I’m going to send you off to escort my shipment of birthday gifts for Grand Preceptor Ts’ai. And when you get back, I’m going to send you on another business trip to Hang-chou.”

Lai-wang was delighted by this and readily consented. He returned to his room to get his gear together and then went out to buy a few things.

As soon as Lai-hsing heard what had happened he came and reported it all to Chin-lien. Upon inquiry, Chin-lien was told that Hsi-men Ch’ing was in the summerhouse in the garden and went there but did not find him. All she found was Ch’en Ching-chi, who was supervising the packing of the python robes and bolts of fabric.

Before this time Hsi-men Ch’ing had hired silversmiths to come to his residence and create a piece in which four male figurines were depicted holding up a representation of the character for long life. Each of the silver figures in this work was more than a foot high, and it was very skillfully wrought. In addition, there were two gold pitchers in the shape of the character for long life, two sets of jade cups in the shape of peaches, and two python robes of heavy scarlet variegated silk that had been manufactured in Hang-chou. All that was lacking were two bolts of jet abaca linen and two python robes

of light scarlet silk, which he had been unable to purchase anywhere.

“On the second floor of my place over there,” said Li. P’ing-erh, “I’ve got a number of python robes that haven’t been made up yet. Let me go take a look.”

Before long, Hsi-men Ch’ing joined her, and they went up to the second floor of her belvedere to have a look. She pulled out four items, two bolts of jet abaca linen and two python robes of light scarlet silk with variegated insignia and brocade borders, ten times better in quality and design than the ones from Hang-chou. Hsi-men Ch’ing was as pleased as could be. These were the materials that Ch’en Ching-chi was having packed up in the summerhouse.

“Where’s your father?” Chin-lien asked him. “And what are you packing?”

“Father was here just a minute ago,” said Ching-chi. “He’s gone up to the second floor of the Sixth Lady’s place. I’m packing up the birthday gifts for Grand Preceptor Ts’ai Ching in the Eastern Capital.”

“Who’s being sent to deliver them?” Chin-lien asked.

“I heard that yesterday Father ordered Lai-wang to go,” replied Ching-chi. “No doubt he’s sending Lai-wang.”

Chin-lien was just stepping down off the stylobate to head for the garden when she ran into Hsi-men Ch’ing and pulled him into her room.

“Who are you sending to the Eastern Capital tomorrow?” she asked.

“Lai-wang and my manager, Wu Tien-en,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing. “There’s that matter of the thousand taels of silver to fix things up for the salt merchant, Wang Ssu-feng. That’s why I’m sending two people.”

“You may do as you please,” the woman said. “You don’t pay attention to anything I say, but listen only to the one-sided words of that slave of a whore. Whatever she does is only designed to cover up for her husband. He’s already uttered threats against you on more than one occasion. He may well decide to go for broke,

abandon his wife to you, appropriate your goods, and abscond somewhere:

Just as easy as you please,[37]

without giving you a second thought. You may be willing to take your own losses, however gratuitous, but it's too bad about that thousand taels of silver that belongs to somebody else. Never fear, you'll have to compensate him. As for what I say:

Mull it over in your mind; then
Do as you please, do as you please.

"Whatever that woman has had to say for some time now has only been spoken on behalf of that slave of yours. Simply because you covet that wife of his, it's no good keeping him at home, and if you send him away on business it's no good either. If you keep him at home, you'll run the risk, sooner or later, of letting down your guard. If you send him away somewhere and he makes free with your capital, first off, you'll not be in a very good position to accuse him of anything. If you really want to have that slave's wife to yourself, you'd better first contrive to have that slave:

Driven away from this door for good.

As the saying goes:

If one cuts the weeds without pulling up the roots,
New sprouts will grow up as before;
If one cuts the weeds and pulls up the roots,
New sprouts will never grow again.[38]

For your part, then, you'd have nothing to worry about, and the woman, too, would be able to:

Resign herself to her fate."[39]

The effect of this speech on Hsi-men Ch'ing was such that:

It was as though he had just been awakened
from a drunken stupor.[40]

Truly:

A few words serve to disclose the proper path
to a gentleman;

A single speech suffices to awaken the sleeper
from his dream.[41]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 26

LAI-WANG IS SENT UNDER PENAL ESCORT TO HSÜ-CHOU; SUNG HUI-LIEN IS SHAMED INTO COMMITTING SUICIDE

Be careful, whatever you do, never to say,
  "It doesn't matter";
No sooner have you said, "It doesn't matter,"
  than it will matter.
Those who always strive for precedence
  resort to evil devices;
Words that are uttered in due turn
  have a more enduring savor.
A surfeit of tasty foodstuffs will end up
  making you sick;
Pleasurable events, once over, are sure to
  result in disaster.
Rather than having to seek for medicine
  after you are sick;
It would be better to take preventive steps
  before falling ill.[1]

THE STORY GOES that on hearing Chin-lien's argument, Hsi-men Ch'ing changed his mind.

The next day Lai-wang got his gear together and stood ready to start packing the saddlebags and set off on his journey to the

Eastern Capital. He waited around until noon but saw no sign of any activity.

What should he see at this juncture but Hsi-men Ch'ing, who came out to the front compound, summoned Lai-wang into his presence, and said, "I was thinking it over last night and concluded that since you've hardly been back any time at all from your trip to Hang-chou, if I were to send you off to the Eastern Capital now it would be too hard on you. It would be better to let Lai-pao go in your stead and give you a chance to get a few days of rest here at home. I'll look around in the near future for some new business I could open on the street front of my property and put you in charge of it."

It has always been true that:

The owner may do with his property as he likes;
The customer may choose whether or not to buy.[2]

How could Lai-wang presume to protest? All he could do was to accept the situation.

Hsi-men Ch'ing thereupon turned the birthday gifts, the valuables and silver, the saddlebags and letters all over to Lai-pao and his manager, Wu Tien-en, who set off for the Eastern Capital on the twenty-eighth day of the third month. But no more of this.

Lai-wang went back to his room, enraged that his master had decided not to put him in charge of escorting the birthday gifts but to send Lai-pao instead. He managed to get falling-down drunk in his room, uttering all kinds of nonsense, taking it out on Sung Hui-lien, and threatening to kill Hsi-men Ch'ing. Hui-lien gave him a piece of her mind.

"Don't you know that:

The dog that bites does not show its teeth.[3]
Those may be words but they don't make utterances.
Walls have cracks,
Fences have ears.[4]

Now you've had your snootful of that saffron soup, just sack out and sleep it off."

She managed to get him to bed, and he fell asleep.

The next day she went to the rear compound and induced Yü-hsiao to ask Hsi-men Ch'ing to come out and see her. The two of them went to a secluded spot beneath the rear wall behind the kitchen to have a talk, while Yü-hsiao stood at the back gate to act as a lookout for them.

The woman complained vociferously to Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "Father, what kind of a man are you? Originally you said you would have him go, but now you've changed your tack and decided to send someone else. You've got:

The mind of a ball:
Bobbing down, bobbing up.[5]

You're like:

A walking stick made of rush:
Not to be relied upon.[6]

If you were to:

Build a temple and put up a flagpole:
It would sway back and forth like the
Lord of Vacillation himself.

Your prevarications are really just as noisome as your farts. I won't believe anything you say from now on. I argued it all out with you, but it doesn't seem to have had any effect whatever."

"That's not it at all," said Hsi-men Ch'ing with a laugh. "If it hadn't been for one thing, I would have sent him; but I was afraid he wasn't quite as familiar with the household of Grand Preceptor Ts'ai in the Eastern Capital, so I sent Lai-pao instead. I'll keep him here and find something for him to do on the street front of the property."

"Tell me," the woman demanded, "just what sort of business will you find him to do?"

"I'll have him engage a manager," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and open a wineshop by the front gate."

When the woman heard this she was utterly delighted and, going back to her room, told Lai-wang about it, word for word. They only awaited Hsi-men Ch'ing's further instructions.

One day Hsi-men Ch'ing sat down in the front reception hall and summoned Lai-wang into his presence. Six packages of silver had been placed on the table.

"My child," he said, "when you got back from Hang-chou recently you were quite worn-out. I would have sent you to the Eastern Capital, but I was afraid you weren't completely familiar with the household of Grand Preceptor Ts'ai, so I sent Lai-pao and manager Wu instead. Today I'm turning over to you these six packages of silver, three hundred taels in all, so you can engage a manager and open a wineshop by the front gate. You ought to be able to pay me some interest on a monthly basis and still make a profit on it."

Lai-wang promptly prostrated himself on the floor and kowtowed.

Taking the six packages of silver back to his room, he said to his wife, "He's:

Done a complete about-face.

He's offering me this business in order to placate me. Today he's turned over these three hundred taels of silver to me and wants me to engage a manager and open a wineshop for him."

"You crazy louse of a black jailbird!" the woman said. "And you only got angry when I told you that:

One spadeful of earth won't dig a well:[7]

Things take a little time to make.

How is it that today you're going into business after all? I only hope you'll:

Abide by your lot and behave yourself,[8]

and stop getting drunk and giving vent to all that:

Ridiculous blatherskite."

"Put the silver into the trunk," Lai-wang said to his wife. "I'm going out to look for a manager."

Thereupon, he went out to look for a manager. He continued his search until evening but failed to find a manager and came home very drunk, where his wife put him to bed.

This was one of those occasions on which:

Something was destined to happen.

He had not been asleep very long when, sometime in the first watch as people were just settling down for the night, a hubbub arose in the rear compound and cries of “Catch the thief!” were heard. His wife nudged Lai-wang awake and, although he was still stupefied with drink, he crawled to his feet, reached for the quarterstaff he kept at one end of the bed, and set off for the rear compound to chase the thief.

“It’s late at night,” his wife expostulated. “You’d better find out what’s going on. You ought not to just rush into the situation.”

Lai-wang said:

“One maintains troops for a thousand days,
For the one day on which they are needed.[9]

How can one hear there’s a thief on the premises without giving chase?”

Thereupon, with his quarterstaff at the ready, he raced through the inner gate in large strides.

What should he see but Yü-hsiao, standing on the stylobate of the reception hall and calling out in a loud voice, “A thief has got into the garden!”

Lai-wang headed straight for the garden. When he got as far as the postern gate by the anterooms on the side of the courtyard, he was taken by surprise as a bench came flying out from the black shadows and tripped him up. What should he see next but a knife falling to the ground with a clatter nearby. From either side four or five page boys came rushing out, calling loudly, “Catch the thief!” Converging upon Lai-wang, they proceeded to take him into custody.

“But I’m Lai-wang!” he exclaimed. “I came to catch the thief. How can you turn things upside down by seizing me?”

His assailants:

Without permitting any further explanation,
With two strokes of a stick for every step,

drove him to the reception hall. What should he see there but Hsi-men Ch’ing, sitting in state in the main reception hall which was:

Ablaze with lamps and candles.

"Bring him up here," Hsi-men Ch'ing called out.

Kneeling down on the floor, Lai-wang said, "I heard there was a thief on the premises, so I came in to catch the thief. How can you end up seizing me instead?"

Lai-hsing then placed the knife in front of him so Hsi-men Ch'ing could see it.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was highly incensed and cursed him, saying:

"Of all living beings man is the most
difficult to save.[10]

This rascal is really a murderer. When I saw you come back from your trip to Hang-chou, I turned over three hundred taels of silver to you so you could go into business. Why, then, should you sneak into the interior of my home late at night with the intent to murder me? If that were not your intent, what did you have this knife for? Bring it here so I can have a good look at it by lamplight."

It was a thick-bladed, fine-edged knife that tapered to a piercing point and was as sharp as frost.

On examining it, Hsi-men Ch'ing became angrier than ever and shouted to his attendants, "Take him to his room and bring back those three hundred taels of silver."

The crowd of menservants thereupon escorted him to his room.

When Hui-lien saw them she began to cry out loud, saying, "He went into the rear compound to catch the thief. How can you seize him for a thief?"

Then, turning to Lai-wang, she said, "I told you not to go, but you didn't pay any attention; and now, sure enough, you've allowed yourself to be made the instrument of someone else's revenge."

She opened the trunk and took out the six packages of silver, which were taken back to the reception hall. Hsi-men Ch'ing opened them by the light of the lamps and found that only one of them contained silver. The others all contained ingots of pewter or lead.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was highly incensed and demanded, "How could you hope to get away with such a substitution? Where's my silver

gotten to? The sooner you tell me the truth the better for you."

Lai-wang wept, saying, "Father was kind enough to give me the opportunity to go into business. How could I dare take such a liberty as to substitute anything for your silver?"

"You had this knife made," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and wanted to kill me with it. The knife is right here as evidence. How can you make any further excuses?"

Then he called for Kan Lai-hsing and had him kneel down and give his evidence.

"Didn't you, on such and such a day," Lai-hsing said, "openly state, in the front compound in front of everybody, that you were going to kill Father, because you were so angry that he was no longer steering any business your way?"

Lai-wang could only sigh.

His mouth dropped open, and
He was unable to close it.

Summoning his menservants, Hsi-men Ch'ing said to them, "Since the goods and the weapon are in evidence, tie him up and lock him in the gatehouse. Tomorrow I'll have a formal complaint drawn up and turn him over to the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission."

Who should appear at this point but Sung Hui-lien, who came running into the reception hall in such a state that:

Her clouds of hair were in disorder, and
Her clothes were in disarray.

Kneeling down to perform an obeisance to Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Neither correctly nor precisely,

she said, "Father, this business is all your doing. He went inside to chase the thief with the best of intentions, and you've had him seized as though he were a thief! I put those six packages of silver of yours away myself, and:

The original seals have not been tampered with.[11]

How could any substitution have been made for no good reason? You can't just bury someone alive like this without offending against

Heavenly principle. If he has committed some offense, just give him a beating appropriate to the offense. Where are you sending him off to with such a fuss?”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing saw her:

His anger turned to joy,

and he said, “My child, it has nothing to do with you. You can get up. This unreasonable and outrageous behavior of his has been going on for sometime. Now he has secreted a knife on his person and tried to kill me. You knew nothing about it, so you can relax. It’s not your affair.”

Then he turned to the page boy Lai-an and ordered him, “Quickly now, help your elder brother’s wife back to her room; and don’t do anything to upset her.”

Hui-lien remained on her knees and refused to get up, saying, “Father, how can you be so cruel!

If you won’t do it for the priest’s sake,
do it for the Buddha’s.

When I plead with you this way, won’t you accede to my request? As for him, although he does drink too much, he would never do such a thing.”

She pestered Hsi-men Ch’ing until he was frantic and ordered Lai-an to help her to her feet and coax her back to her room.

The next day Hsi-men Ch’ing wrote a personal note about the matter and instructed Lai-hsing to be prepared to testify as a witness, to take the formal complaint with him, and to escort Lai-wang to the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission. He was to say that on such and such a day, while in his cups, he had secreted a knife on his person and, late at night, made an attempt on the life of his master; and also that he had substituted base metal for the silver he had been given, etc.

Just as they were about to set out, who should appear but Wu Yüeh-niang, who:

Lightly moved her lotus feet,

and came out to the main reception hall, where she repeatedly urged clemency on Hsi-men Ch’ing, saying, “If a slave does anything

wrong, why don't you punish him at home and make an end of it? Why should you want to make such a fuss and have him:

Haled before the judge and exposed in the courtroom?"

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard these words he:

Opened wide his two eyes,

and shouted at her, "You're only a woman who doesn't understand anything. The slave intended to kill me and yet you urge me to forgive him!"

Thereupon, disregarding Yüeh-niang's plea, he ordered his minions to escort Lai-wang to the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission.

All that Yüeh-niang could do was to retire in confusion and go back to the rear compound, where she said to Meng Yü-lou and the others, "Right now in this household:

Chaos is king.

The nine-tailed fox fairy has appeared in the world.[12]

I don't know whose words he's been taken in by that he should drive a servant out of the household for no good reason. Even if you're going to falsely accuse him of being a thief:

The only thing that ought to matter is the truth.

What justification is there for:

Pasting a paper coffin on someone?[13]

He's really acting like an irrational, good-for-nothing, benighted ruler!"

Sung Hui-lien knelt down in front of her and wept.

"Child," said Yüeh-niang, "you can get up. There's no need to weep. Your husband, in any case, cannot be convicted of a capital crime. Even people guilty of manslaughter sometimes get off. That lousy ruffian has:

Swallowed a soul-disorienting drug.[14]

Nothing we say is worth listening to. We're like:

Women serving in the army:

Merely taking up space."[15]

Yü-lou said to Hui-lien, “Your father is just at the height of his rage. Later on we’ll approach him gradually and try again to dissuade him. You’d better calm down and return to your room.”

Let us put this aside for a moment and say no more about it, but return to the story of how Lai-wang was escorted to the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission. Hsi-men Ch’ing had already sent Tai-an ahead to deliver “a hundred piculs of white rice” to Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling and Battalion Commander Ho Chin. Only after they had accepted this gratuity did they take their seats in the tribunal.

Lai-hsing handed up Hsi-men Ch’ing’s formal complaint, which stated that Lai-wang, having previously accepted a sum of silver with which to start a business:

> On seeing the money developed ideas,[16]

and substituted base metal for the silver; whereupon, fearing that his master would discover the imposition, he had late at night secreted a knife on his person and intruded into the inner reception hall with the intent of killing his master, etc. On perusing the complaint, Hsia Yen-ling and Ho Chin were greatly incensed and had Lai-wang haled before them to answer the charges.

“I hope Your Honor will look carefully into the matter,” pled Lai-wang. “If you permit me to speak, I will presume to speak. If you don’t permit me to speak, I will not presume to speak.”

“You rascal,” said Judicial Commissioner Hsia, “the evidence of your guilt is clear. There’s no getting around it. You’d better tell me the truth lest I put the screws on you.”

Lai-wang gave a full account of how Hsi-men Ch’ing had initially deputed someone to tempt his wife, nee Sung, with a bolt of blue silk, how he had then flirted with and seduced her, and how he was now deliberately framing him in order to get him out of the way so he could have sole possession of his wife.

Judicial Commissioner Hsia shouted to his minions to slap the prisoner across the mouth, saying, “You slave! You’ve betrayed your master. This woman of yours was provided for you by your master

to be your wife. He also entrusted capital to you so you could start a business. While you:

Not thinking to repay your obligation,[17]

instead got drunk and broke into his sleeping quarters late at night, secreting a knife upon your person with the intent to murder him. If every slave were like you, the people of the empire would not dare to employ servants."[18]

Lai-wang continued to claim he was being dealt with unjustly until Judicial Commissioner Hsia called up Kan Lai-hsing to testify against him. At this, Lai-wang:

Though he had a mouth, had nothing further to say.

Truly:

Though he was master of all the Heavenly arts,
He could not avert the calamity before his eyes.[19]

Judicial Commissioner Hsia thereupon ordered his minions to bring out the largest grade of ankle-squeezers. These were applied to Lai-wang, and, after they were tightened in place, he was given twenty strokes with a heavy bamboo. They beat him so severely that:

The skin was broken, the flesh was split, and
Fresh blood flowed down his legs.

The lictors were then ordered to take him away and put him in the lockup.

Lai-hsing and Tai-an went home and reported what had happened to Hsi-men Ch'ing, who was utterly delighted.

He gave orders to his servants, as follows, "None of you is to deliver any bedding or food to Lai-wang in prison. Even the fact that he was beaten; I don't want any of you coming home and telling his wife about it. Just say that he was not beaten a single stroke in the yamen, and that after he's been held for a few days they'll let him go."

The servants all assented, saying, "We understand."

Sung Hui-lien, from the time that Lai-wang was taken away:

Did not comb her hair,
Did not wash her face,

Allowed her features to become sallow,
Did not straighten her skirt,
Scuffed around with her slippers on backwards,
Wept behind closed doors, and
Consumed neither tea nor food.[20]

Hsi-men Ch'ing became frantic about it and sent Yü-hsiao and Pen the Fourth's wife to her room, again and again, to try to reason with her.

"You ought not to take it so hard," they said to her. "Because of the way he got drunk and misspoke himself, Father has just had him locked up for a few days to teach him a lesson. It won't be long before he'll let him out again."

Hui-lien did not believe them. She sent the page boy Lai-an to deliver food to him in prison and when he returned interrogated him about it, but he repeated the same story.

"When Elder Brother went before the magistrate," he said, "he was not beaten a single stroke. He ought to be home in a day or two. He said for you to stay home and not to worry about it."

Only after hearing these words did Hui-lien stop crying. Every day, she:

Lightly painted her moth eyebrows,[21]
Judiciously applied rouge and powder,

and came out and went about her business. Hsi-men Ch'ing frequently came and went outside the door of her room.

From beneath the bamboo blind the woman called to him, saying, "There's nobody else here. Won't you come in and sit down for a while?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing slipped into the room and the two of them had a tête-a-tête together.

Hsi-men Ch'ing deceived her, saying, "My child, you can relax. For your sake I wrote a note to the officials so that he has not been beaten a single stroke. They're going to keep him locked up for a few days to teach him a lesson, but he ought to be out in a day or two, after which he can resume his business as before."

The woman put her arms around Hsi-men Ch'ing's neck, saying, "My own daddy! Whatever you do, for my sake, give him a hard time for a few days and then let him out again. I don't care whether you have him open a business for you or not. Once he gets out this time, I'll see to it that he stops drinking altogether. No matter whether you:

Send him near or send him far,

he can hardly refuse to go. Or better yet, if you feel the situation is too inconvenient, find another wife for him. That would settle the matter as far as he's concerned, and I would no longer feel that I belonged to him forever."

"Dear heart," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "what you say is true. One day soon I'll buy the Ch'iao family's property across the street and fix up a three-room house for you to live in. Once you've moved in over there the two of us can:

Enjoy ourselves to our heart's content."

"Darling," the woman said, "Whatever you propose to do will be all right with me."

When they had concluded their parley they closed the door of the room.

It so happened that during the summer months the woman was in the habit of going without her underdrawers, so she only had on a pair of skirts. On the occasion of this encounter with Hsi-men Ch'ing, all she had to do was to lift her skirts out of the way and they could fall to it. She kept a breath-sweetening lozenge in her mouth at all times.

Thereupon:

Untying her girdle pendant, she discloses the jade
of the Nymph of the Hsiang River;[22]
Distending her ruby lips, she displays the cloves
of the Han dynasty Secretariat.[23]
Her pair of wild ducks flies to his shoulders;[24]
As they consummate a bout of clouds and rain.

The woman unfastened the white silver-striped silk drawnwork scent bag with four dangling tassels that hung at her waist—it was

filled with pine and cypress seeds, rose petals, and aromatic lysimachia from Annam and was adorned with a drawnwork eight-character inscription reading:

Winter and summer forever green,
Delicate, fragrant, beautiful, and lovely—

and had Hsi-men Ch'ing tie it to his own waist-string. He was as pleased as could be with this and only wished the two of them could:

Swear fealty in life and death,
Unable to tear themselves apart.

Reaching into his sleeve he fished out one or two taels of silver and gave it to her to buy sweetmeats with.

As they dallied with each other in her room he repeatedly reassured her, saying, "There's no need to worry. I'm afraid you'll only worry yourself sick. Tomorrow I'll write a note to His Honor Hsia and have him released."

After they had spoken for a while, Hsi-men Ch'ing was afraid someone would come by and hurriedly took his leave.

The woman, having obtained this promise from Hsi-men Ch'ing, went to the rear compound where, in speaking to the maidservants and wives, she did not succeed in preventing some intimation of it from leaking out in her words and expression.

Meng Yü-lou soon found out about it and came to tell P'an Chin-lien what she had heard, saying, "Father has determined, sooner or later, to release Lai-wang and find another wife for him. He's going to buy the Ch'iao family's residence across the street, move her over there, set aside a three-room house for her to live in, and buy a maidservant to wait on her. He's going to have a fret of silver filigree and other jewelry made for her as well."

Word for word she recounted the whole story. "She'll be on an equal status with you and me. What sort of behavior is that? And our elder sister won't do anything to prevent it."

Nothing might have happened if P'an Chin-lien had not heard about this, but having heard about it:

Anger swelled her breast but there was
no place to put it;
The red of her two cheeks was further
augmented with red.

"So he's really going to accede to her demands?" she said. "I refuse to believe it. I'll tell you right now, if I let that slave of a whore become Hsi-men Ch'ing's seventh concubine—and this is no idle boast—you might as well turn my name P'an on its head!"

"If our husband ignores the proprieties," said Yü-lou, "and his legitimate wife won't do anything about it:

We may be able to run, but we can't fly,
Where can we hope to get to?"

"You're really hopeless," said Chin-lien. "What's this life worth anyway!

Though you live to be a hundred, you'll only
be butchered for your meat.

If he doesn't go along with me, I'll put my life up against hers any day; what's it to me?"

"I don't have the stomach to cross him," laughed Yü-lou. "If you've got what it takes, I'll stand by and watch you take him on."

To make a long story short, that evening Hsi-men Ch'ing took a seat in his study in the Kingfisher Pavilion in the garden and was about to send for Ch'en Ching-chi to get him to draft a note for him to Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, instructing him to release Lai-wang, when Chin-lien suddenly showed up, leaned over the writing desk, and asked, "What note are you having your son-in-law draft for you, and who is it addressed to?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Could not conceal the situation,[25]

and told her all about how he intended to have Lai-wang punished with a few strokes and then released.

The woman stopped the servant, saying to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "Don't send for your son-in-law."

Then she sat down beside him and said, “You only pretend to be a real man while all the time you’re just a good-for-nothing who:

Adjusts his rudder to the wind,[26] and
Pushes the boat along with the current.[27]

You ignore everything I took the trouble to say to you and go along with that lousy slave of a whore’s every whim. No matter what lengths you go to:

Mixing granulated sugar with honey,

for her to eat every day, she will still only hanker after that husband of hers. Now if you insist on releasing that slave, you really can’t very well take on his wife without giving him a pretext to use against you. If you keep her around the house under such circumstances she’ll be:

Neither fish nor fowl.

What sort of status will you assign to her? If you treat her as your concubine, that slave will still be in the way. If you treat her as the wife of your slave, you’ve been indulging her too inappropriately. She’s been:

Assuming privileges above her station,[28]

for everyone to see, making a real spectacle of herself. Even if you found another woman for that slave so you could appropriate his wife; in the future, if the two of you were sitting together someplace and that slave came in to report something, how could he help being angry when he saw you two together? When the woman saw him, should she stand up or remain seated? Just to start out with, this alone wouldn’t look right. If it got around, not only would your neighbors and relatives laugh at you, but even the members of your own household, high and low, would not be able to take you seriously.

Truly:

If the ridgepole is not straight,
The rafters will be crooked.[29]

“If you are really determined on this business you’re acting like someone who:

Swears he want’s to be a loach, but

Is afraid of getting mud in his eyes.[30]

You would do better to be:

Once ruthless, ruthless to the end,[31]

and polish off this slave once and for all. Then you could embrace his wife with an easy mind."

With these few sentences she succeeded once again in persuading Hsi-men Ch'ing to change his mind.

A note was written and dispatched to the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, directing Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling to settle the case against Lai-wang within three days. He was subjected to a severe interrogation during the course of which he was squeezed and beaten until he was scarcely recognizable. The two judicial commissioners, as well as the inspectors, the detectives, the orderlies, and even the turnkeys in the jail, both high and low, had all been paid off by Hsi-men Ch'ing to see that the prisoner was treated severely rather than leniently.

Among them there was a chief clerk in charge of the files whose name was Yin Chih, or Good Deed.[32] He was a native of Hsiao-i[33] district in Shansi province and was an exceedingly benevolent and honest man. Because the officials of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, both high and low, had accepted Hsi-men Ch'ing's bribes and colluded in framing the prisoner so that he could appropriate his wife, they had indicted him for the serious crime of "a servant coveting his master's property and attempting to murder him with knife in hand."[34]

Yin Chih thought to himself:

"One must have some regard for Heaven's principles.[35]

Officials, too:

Raise sons and raise daughters,

Hoping that they will grow to adulthood."[36]

He repeatedly refused to make out the papers that would enable Lai-wang to be brought to trial and argued the case with the judicial commissioners face to face. However, the two judicial commissioners had both been bought off by Hsi-men Ch'ing. The result was an impasse that made it difficult to proceed any further.

Moreover, Lai-wang had no money of his own to distribute in the jail, so he was subject to mistreatment. Fortunately for him, Yin Chih took pity on the fact that he had:

Suffered injustice and harbored resentment,

and was without resources of his own, and ordered the jailers in the prison to treat him leniently and look out for him.

Yin Chih succeeded in delaying the disposition of the case for several days, but eventually:

His obligations canceled each other out,

and Lai-wang was given forty strokes of the bamboo in the courtroom and sentenced to be remanded under penal escort to the jurisdiction of Hsü-chou, his native place. It was determined that seventeen taels of the misappropriated silver had already been spent and the remainder, along with the five packages of pewter or lead, were turned over to Hsi-men Ch'ing's retainer, Lai-hsing, to be returned to their rightful owner. A note was written by the authorities and dispatched to Hsi-men Ch'ing to inform him of the outcome of the case.

It was ordered that the prisoner should set out under penal escort that same day. The judicial commissioners issued the necessary papers on the bench, and two guards were deputed to bring Lai-wang before the court. He had already been beaten to a pulp. He was subsequently fastened into a cangue, which was duly sealed, and the guards were ordered to set out that same day for Hsü-chou and turn him over to the authorities there.

Lai-wang was in a pitiable state. He had been incarcerated for half a month or so without any money of his own. As a result his body was lacerated, his clothes were tattered, and he had nowhere to turn.

Weeping unceasingly, he appealed to his guards, saying, "With all due respect to you two brothers, I've just been the victim of a miscarriage of justice. As a result:

I haven't a candareen to my name,
Nor so much as an inch of cloth.

If I am to come up with something in the way of remuneration for you two, I've got no place to raise it. If you will only take pity on me and escort me to my master's residence, my wife is there and also a boxful of my clothes. If I can get them out and sell them off, I should be able to realize enough to compensate you for your trouble and make things a little easier for us on the road."

The two guards said, "You don't know what you're up against. Since it's your master, Hsi-men Ch'ing, who is responsible for your predicament in the first place, what likelihood is there that he would consent to relinquish your wife or your boxes? Don't you have any other relatives or friends? Out of consideration for Master Yin, we might be willing to:

Deceive our superiors but not our inferiors,[37]

and take you there to raise some money or rice for the expenses of the trip. Who's expecting anything else in the way of remuneration from you?"

"My two brothers," said Lai-wang, "for pity's sake, just take me as far as the gate of my master's house and I'll beg two or three neighbors to put in a good word for me.

If there isn't a lot, there'll be a little."[38]

"All right," said the two guards, "we'll escort you as far as his gate."

Lai-wang first applied at the house of Ying Po-chüeh, but Po-chüeh pretended not to be at home. He then asked Hsi-men Ch'ing's close neighbors, Chia Jen-ch'ing, or False Feelings, and I Mien-tz'u, or Ostensibly Benign,[39] if they would intercede on his behalf for the return of his wife and things. Hsi-men Ch'ing did not appear himself but sent out five or six page boys with sticks to prevent them from making any further disturbance outside his gate. Chia Jen-ch'ing and I Mien-tz'u were thoroughly mortified. His wife, Sung Hui-lien, who was in her room at the time, was kept as completely in the dark as if she had been:

Locked tight in an iron bucket,

and didn't know a word about it. Hsi-men Ch'ing gave orders that any page boy who leaked information on the subject would be

sentenced to twenty strokes with the bamboo.

The two guards then escorted Lai-wang to the house of his father-in-law, the coffin seller, Sung Jen, where Lai-wang, thus and so, tearfully told him the whole story. Sung Jen sent him off with a single tael of silver and came up with one string of copper cash and a peck of rice for the two guards in the way of traveling expenses.

It was the first decade of the fourth month when, weeping and wailing, Lai-wang set out on his journey away from Ch'ing-ho district along the highroad toward Hsü-chou. The wounds from his beating had broken open, and he lacked sufficient funds for the trip. He was miserable indeed. Truly:



Lai-wang Is Sent under Penal Escort to Hsü-chou

If one is only able, somehow,
to preserve his foolish life;

He will be happy to go hungry
for the rest of his days.

There is a poem that testifies to this:

The file clerk, in investigating this case,
maintained the utmost impartiality;
He was successful in rescuing Lai-wang
from the toils of incarceration.
Though he was condemned to penal escort
all the way back to Hsü-chou;
The sickly verdure recovered its health
upon exposure to the genial breeze.[40]

We will say no more about how Lai-wang was sent under penal escort to Hsü-chou.

To resume our story, Sung Hui-lien remained at home looking forward every day to her husband's release. The page boys continued to be dispatched as before in order to deliver food to him, but as soon as they got outside they ate it themselves.

When they returned Hui-lien would interrogate them, and they reported, "Brother ate the food. Nothing is happening in the jail. Otherwise he would have been released by now. For the last several days their honors the judicial commissioners have not come to the yamen to conduct business. He should be home in another day or two."

Hsi-men Ch'ing also deceived her, saying, "I've sent someone to take care of it. He should be out before long."

The woman believed this to be true.

One day, she overheard "wind-borne words" to the effect that Lai-wang had been let out of jail and escorted to the front gate where he had asked for his box of clothes and then gone off somewhere or other. The woman asked about this several times but the page boys wouldn't tell her anything.

Then she happened to see Tai-an, who was bringing Hsi-men Ch'ing's horse back to the house, and asked, "How's your brother

Lai-wang doing in jail, and when will he get out?”

“Sister-in-law,” said Tai-an, “I might as well tell you. By this time my brother must have reached the River of Flowing Sands.”[41]

When Hui-lien demanded to know what he meant, Tai-an, though he:

Never, ever, should have done it,[42]

told her, thus and so, “He was beaten forty strokes and remanded under penal escort to the jurisdiction of Hsü-chou, his native place. But you must keep it to yourself. Don’t tell anyone I told you.”

If the woman had not heard about this, nothing might have happened, but having heard these words, which she recognized to be the truth, she closed the door to her room and began to cry out loud, saying, “My husband, since you’ve been in this household what business of his have you ever ruined that he should want to:

Paste a paper coffin on you,

and conspire against you behind your back? Since you’ve been a slave of his you haven’t even stashed away so much as a decent article of clothing for yourself. So now it’s only fitting that you should be traduced into being packed off:

Far away from home,

leaving me in a pretty predicament. While you’re on the road:

I don’t know whether you’re alive or dead,
I can’t tell whether you’ll survive or perish.[43]

They might as well have:

Put a water crock over my head,

for all I knew about it.”

She wept for a while and then took a long towel, fastened it to the lintel over her bedroom door, and hanged herself.

Who could have anticipated that Lai-chao’s wife, “The Beanpole,” whose room was adjacent to hers, happened to have come back from the rear compound and heard her crying for a while, after which there was a period of silence, finally succeeded by the sound of panting. She knocked on the door of her room and called to her, but received no response. Becoming panic-stricken, she got the page

boy, P’ing-an, to pry open the window and shin himself inside. Finding the woman, dressed in her everyday clothes, neatly suspended in the doorframe, he cut her down and opened the door, after which they administered artificial respiration and poured ginger extract into her mouth.

It was not long before news of the event reached the rear compound and Wu Yüeh-niang, leading Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, Hsi-men Ta-chieh, Li P’ing-erh, Yü-hsiao, and Hsiao-yü, all came to see what had happened. Pen the Fourth’s wife also came to have a look. “The Beanpole” was sitting on the ground holding her in an upright position. She was making choking noises but was still unable to cry audibly. When Yüeh-niang spoke to her she only hung her head, drooling saliva and phlegm from her mouth, and did not respond.

“You’re being a silly child,” said Yüeh-niang. “If you had anything to complain about, it would have been better to speak up. Why should you feel that you had to resort to this way out?”

She then asked “The Beanpole,” “Have you given her any ginger extract yet?”

“I’ve just given her some,” said “The Beanpole,” “and she swallowed it.”

Yüeh-niang told Yü-hsiao to help prop her up and then personally appealed to her, “Hui-lien, my child, no matter what it is you’ve got on your mind, you’d do better to blurt it out truthfully. It won’t be held against you.”

She continued appealing to her for some time, but the woman only sobbed inaudibly for a while and then began to cry out loud:

Clapping her hands and beating her palms.

Yüeh-niang told Yü-hsiao to help her onto the k’ang, but she refused to get onto it. After Yüeh-niang and the others had endeavored to placate her for some time, they returned to the rear compound, leaving only Pen the Fourth’s wife and Yü-hsiao to keep her company in her room.

Who should appear at this juncture but Hsi-men Ch’ing, who lifted aside the portiere and came in.

Seeing that she was sitting, weeping, on the cold ground, he ordered Yü-hsiao, “Help her onto the k’ang.”

“Mother told her to get up there just now,” said Yü-hsiao, “but she refused to do so.”

“What a stubborn child,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “You’ll get a chill from the cold ground. If you have something to say, tell me about it. How could you do such a foolish thing?”

“Father,” said Hui-lien, shaking her head, “a fine man you are! That’s quite a stunt you’ve managed to pull off behind my back! Who cares whether you call me your child or not? It turns out that you’re just:

An executioner who likes to play with his victims.[44]

You’re so inured to burying people alive that you can bring yourself to:

Kill a person off and then attend the funeral.

All day long you kept on deceiving me. One day you said he’d be released, and the next day you said he’d be released, until you had me believing that he would really be freed. If you were going to have him sent into exile, you could, at least, have let me know what you were up to. Secretly, without giving me so much as an inkling, to send him off so far away! You must have some regard for Heaven’s principles. How can you express your confidence in someone and then subject him to such drastic measures? The trap had already been sprung, but you continued to keep me in the dark. If you were determined to get him out of the way, why didn’t you get us both out of the way? What are you keeping me around for?”

“My child,” responded Hsi-men Ch’ing with a smile, “it’s got nothing to do with you. Why should I want to get you out of the way because that rascal was at fault? You just relax and leave it to me.”

Then he said to Yü-hsiao, “You and Pen the Fourth’s wife keep her company overnight. I’ll send a page boy with some wine for you to drink.”

When he had finished speaking, he went outside.

Pen the Fourth's wife, after some time, succeeded in getting her to sit up on the k'ang. She and Yü-hsiao sat down together with her and did their best to comfort her.

It so happened that Hsi-men Ch'ing went to the shop on the street front of the compound and asked Manager Fu for a string of cash, with which he bought a mace worth of deep fried cutlets, which he had put into a box, together with a bottle of wine, and ordered Lai-an to deliver it to Hui-lien's room.

"Father sent me to deliver these things for you to eat, Sister-in-law," he said.

When Hui-lien saw this, she cursed, "You lousy jailbird! Take them away at once before I throw them all over the floor.

First he beats a person with his big fists,
And then he rubs the bruises with his hand."[45]

"You'd better keep them, Sister-in-law," said Lai-an. "If I take them back, Father will only beat me."

Thereupon, he set them down on the table and went out. Hui-lien jumped off the k'ang, grabbed the wine, and would have run out and thrown it after him, if "The Beanpole" had not stopped her.

As Pen the Fourth's wife was keeping watch and "The Beanpole" was biting her fingernails, who should appear but Pen the Fourth's daughter, Chang-chieh, who had come to fetch her mother, saying, "Father's just arrived home and wants something to eat."

Pen the Fourth's wife and "The Beanpole" went out as far as "The Beanpole's" door, where they found Hsi-men Ta-chieh and Lai-pao's wife, Hui-hsiang, talking to each other.

They asked Pen the Fourth's wife where she was off to, and she replied, "My husband's just arrived home and wants something to eat. I'll just look in there and then come back. I only came over to see what was happening, and then Father insisted that I stay and keep her company. How could I have known I'd get tied up and be unable to get away?"

"What could she have been thinking of," they went on to ask, "that led her to take this way out?"

“It’s lucky for her I happened to come back from the rear compound,” said “The Beanpole,” picking up where Pen the Fourth’s wife had left off. “I could hear her crying in her room and then I didn’t hear anything. That disturbed me, so I tried to force my way through her door, but it wouldn’t open. Then I called P’ing-an and got him to jump in through the window. It was only then that he succeeded in cutting her down. If he’d been a minute later she would have been a goner, like:

The bearded oldster who blew out the lamp,
Only to burn himself to death.”[46]

“When Father was in her room just now, what did she have to say?” asked Hui-hsiang.

Pen the Fourth’s wife laughed, saying, “Who could have known that Lai-wang’s wife would turn out to be such a peppery article? She gave him tit for tat, just as though they were equals. Who ever heard of a servant’s wife carrying on so high-handedly?”

“This servant’s wife,” said Hui-hsiang, “is not like other servants’ wives. She’s more like a daughter-in-law who can hardly be wrested from her father-in-law’s embrace. Who is there in this whole household, high or low, who is her equal?”

Having had her say, Hui-hsiang went home.

“Sister-in-law,” said “The Beanpole,” “Hurry back after you get home.”

“Needless to say,” replied Pen the Fourth’s wife. “If I didn’t come back, Father would be really upset with me.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing had Pen the Fourth’s wife and “The Beanpole” sit with Hui-lien during the daylight hours and Yü-hsiao sleep with her at night.

Little by little Yü-hsiao endeavored to talk her round, saying, “Sister Sung, you’re an intelligent person. You ought to take advantage of the fact that you’re in the prime of life, a flower that has just opened. The fact that your master loves you shows that your:

Affinities are mutually compatible.

Right now:

Though you may not measure up to your superiors,
You are more than a match for your inferiors.[47]

To be attached to a master is better than to be attached to a slave. Now that he's gone, he's gone for good. It doesn't matter that much that you're so upset, but if you should cry yourself sick, you'd be risking your life. As the saying goes:

Whoever is a monk for a day,
Must strike the bell for a day.[48]

After all, a reputation for chastity is hardly going to end up on your head."

When Hui-lien heard this, all she did was weep, refusing every day to eat either food or congee.

Yü-hsiao reported this to Hsi-men Ch'ing, who told P'an Chin-lien to go and speak to her in person, but Hui-lien remained adamant.

This annoyed Chin-lien, who said to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "That lousy whore! All she cares about is her husband. She says a thousand times:

One night as man and wife gives rise to
a hundred nights of love.[49]

She says ten thousand times:

To walk a hundred steps with one another,
Is enough to develop a lingering affinity.[50]

With a woman as chaste as that, what can you use to secure her affections?"

"Don't you believe those specious arguments of hers," laughed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "If she were really as chaste as all that, she would have remained faithful to the memory of the cook, Chiang Ts'ung, instead of consenting to marry Lai-wang."

He then proceeded to take his seat in the front reception hall and summoned all the page boys and menservants before him for an interrogation.

"Some days ago," he said, "when Lai-wang was sent away under penal escort, who was it who told his wife about it? Whoever is willing to identify the culprit, I will not beat so much as a single

stroke. Otherwise, if I find out who it was, anyone who knew about it and did not confess will receive thirty strokes of the bamboo and be:

Driven away from this door for good."

Suddenly Hua-t'ung knelt down and said, "Your servant dares not speak."

"Speak up," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "it won't do you any harm."

"The other day," said Hua-t'ung, "when Tai-an was bringing Father's horse back to the house, I overhead Sister-in-law ask him about it in the enclosed passageway, and he was indiscreet enough to tell her."

If Hsi-men Ch'ing had not heard these words nothing might have happened, but having heard them, he became enraged and shouted out for someone to go find Tai-an. Tai-an was quickly apprised of this and immediately went to seek refuge in Chin-lien's room, from which he refused to come out.

Chin-lien was washing her face when the page boy ran into her room, knelt down, and wept, saying, "Fifth Lady, save me!"

"You lousy jailbird!" Chin-lien upbraided him. "You came in so suddenly you gave me quite a start. What have you been up to this time?"

"It's because I told Sister-in-law how Lai-wang had been sent away," said Tai-an, "that Father wants to beat me. Whatever you do, Mother, put in a word for me. Otherwise, if I go out while Father is just at the height of his rage, I'll be as good as dead."

"You crazy jailbird!" said Chin-lien. "You're as frightened as a ghost. I wondered what it could be that should so:

Startle Heaven and shake the earth.[51]

But it turns out to be nothing but the affair of that slave of a whore. I order you to remain in this room and don't go out."

Thereupon, she hid him behind the door.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing found that he was unable to summon Tai-an into his presence, he raved like thunder in the front reception hall. He sent two page boys, one after another, to Chin-lien's room

to look for him, but they were forced to leave, empty-handed, with Chin-lien's curses on their heads.

Finally, like a gust of wind, Hsi-men Ch'ing descended upon Chin-lien's room in person, with a riding crop in his hand, and demanded, "Where is that slave?"

Chin-lien paid no attention until Hsi-men Ch'ing had made a search of the premises, dragged Tai-an out from behind the door, and was about to beat him.

At this point, Chin-lien grabbed the riding crop out of his hand, threw it on top of the tester above the bed, and said, "You shameless good-for-nothing! It's a wonder you have the face to play the master. That slave of a whore so hankered after her husband that she hanged herself, and you're so mortified you vent your spleen on a page boy. What's it got to do with him?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing was bug-eyed with rage.

"You go back to the front of the compound," Chin-lien said to the page boy, "and go on about your business. Don't pay any attention to him. If he tries to beat you again, he'll have me to contend with."

Taking advantage of this reprieve, Tai-an headed straight for the front of the compound. Truly:

> With two hands he tore open the road
> between life and death;
> Flopping over and leaping out through
> the gate to perdition.

P'an Chin-lien, having witnessed several such instances of Hsi-men Ch'ing's preoccupation with Sung Hui-lien, thereupon:

> Came up with a plan in her mind.[52]

Going into the rear compound, she set out to provoke Sun Hsüeh-o, saying, "Lai-wang's wife has been talking about how you seduced her husband and told him what she was up to, with the result that Father became angry and had her husband gotten out of the way. When he gave you that beating the other day and took away your jewelry and finery, it was all because of her talebearing."

Sun Hsüeh-o, having been regaled with such an earful of venom, developed a heartful to match.

Taking her leave of Hsüeh-o, Chin-lien then proceeded, in one breath, to make her way to the front of the compound and do the same to Hui-lien, saying, “Sun Hsüeh-o has been talking in the rear compound about how when you were a slave employed by the Ts’ai family you were already an old hand at inveigling your master into adultery. If you hadn’t been making out with your master behind your husband’s back, he would never have been driven out of the household. She claims that those tears of yours are only crocodile tears.”

Chin-lien’s efforts stirred up a:

Sense of grievance and desire for revenge,

on both sides.

One day it was one of those occasions on which:

Something is destined to happen.

It was the eighteenth day of the fourth month, Li Chiao-erh’s birthday, and Auntie Li and Li Kuei-chieh from the licensed quarter had come to help celebrate the occasion. Wu Yüeh-niang invited them to join the other female guests in the rear reception room for a feast. Hsi-men Ch’ing had accepted a social engagement elsewhere and was not at home.

Sung Hui-lien, having eaten breakfast and put in an appearance in the rear compound during the morning, slipped back to her room and slept until the sun began to sink in the west. One maidservant after another was dispatched from the rear compound to call her, but she ignored them all and refused to come out. This was just the pretext that Sun Hsüeh-o had been looking for.

Going to her room to call her, she said, “Sister-in-law, you must think you’re Wang the Beauty,[53] you’re playing so hard to get.”

Hui-lien paid no attention to her but continued to lie on the bed with her face to the wall.

“Sister-in-law,” Hsüeh-o continued, “no doubt you’re thinking of your Lai-wang. It would have been better if you had thought about him a little earlier. If it hadn’t been for you he wouldn’t be dead. He’d still be here in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household.”

On hearing these words, Hui-lien was reminded of what P'an Chin-lien had said to her.

Turning over and jumping out of bed, she said to Hsüeh-o, "There's no need for you to come here to work off your wanton rancor. If it was on my account that he was gotten out of the way, how come you were given such a beating and relegated to a position in which you can't even appear in decent society any more? You ought to consider yourself lucky people refrain from confronting you about it. Everyone should exercise some mutual forbearance. What need is there for you to stick your neck out and find fault with anyone?"

Hsüeh-o became enraged and cursed her, saying, "Why you adulterous whore of a lousy slave! Have you got the colossal nerve to criticize me?"

"If I'm a whore of a slave," retorted Hui-lien, "you're nothing but the mistress of a slave. If I've committed adultery, at least it was with my master; which beats your adultery with a slave. First you seduce my husband behind my back, and then you have the nerve to come around and kick up a fuss about me."

These few words were clearly designed to hit Hsüeh-o where it hurt, and they had the desired effect. Before Hui-lien could do anything to protect herself, Hsüeh-o stepped forward and slapped her full in the face, turning it bright red.

"How dare you strike me?" Hui-lien exclaimed.

Thereupon, she went for her assailant and the two of them started to tussle with each other. Lai-chao's wife, "The Beanpole," hurriedly came over and tried to persuade them to break it up. Even after Hsüeh-o had been forcibly disengaged from her, the two of them continued to:

Revile each other without ceasing.[54]

Wu Yüeh-niang came up and gave them a piece of her mind, saying, "Neither of you have the slightest regard for propriety. No matter whether there are guests present or not, you're willing to:

Turn the whole household upside down.[55]

Just wait till your master comes home and see whether I tell him about it or not."

At this, Hsüeh-o stalked off to the rear compound.

Seeing that Hui-lien's hairdo had been pulled undone, Yüeh-niang said to her, "You'd better comb your hair as quickly as you can and come back to the rear compound."

Hui-lien did not say a word in reply but saw Yüeh-niang on her way and then went into her room, locked the door on the inside, and gave herself up to tears. She continued to cry until it was time to light the lamps. Everyone was busy with the feast for the female guests in the rear compound. Alas, the woman:

Unable to contain her chagrin,

took out two of her foot bindings, fastened them to the doorpost, and:

Hanged herself until dead.[56]

At the time of her death she was twenty-four years of age. Truly:

The good things of this world are
none too enduring;
Colored clouds are prone to scatter
and glass is brittle.[57]

At just that time:

Strange as it may seem,[58]

who could have anticipated that Yüeh-niang should pass right in front of Hui-lien's room as she was seeing off Auntie Li and Kuei-chieh. The door was closed and all was silent within, which made her feel rather apprehensive. As soon as she had seen Auntie Li and her daughter into their sedan chairs, she came back and pushed at Hui-lien's door and called to her but was unable to get it open. Becoming panic-stricken, she had a page boy jump in through the window as before. Truly:

The earthenware crock cannot avoid being
broken on the well curb.[59]

They cut the foot bindings by which she was suspended, laid her down, and administered artificial respiration for some time, but,

though nobody knew just when it had happened:
Alas and alack,
she was already dead. Behold:
Her four limbs are cold as ice,
Her breath is an extinguished lamp.
Her fragrant soul is dim;



Sung Hui-lien Is Shamed into Committing Suicide

Already headed for the Terrace
of Homeward Gazing Spirits.
Her starry eyes are dark;

Its spirits fled, her body
lies on the bare ground.[60]
Who knows to what place her vital essences
have flown;
Unless they are in the flying clouds and the
autumn waters?[61]

When Yüeh-niang realized that their efforts to revive her would prove unsuccessful, she was thrown into consternation and hurriedly sent the page boy, Lai-hsing, to ride on horseback outside the South Gate and ask Hsi-men Ch'ing to come home.

Sun Hsüeh-o was afraid that when Hsi-men Ch'ing arrived home he would:

Pull up the trees to investigate the roots,

and end up putting the blame on her. So she went to the master suite and groveled around on her knees, imploring Yüeh-niang not to mention the fact that she had quarreled with her.

Although Yüeh-niang saw how frightened she was, she couldn't bring herself to let her off completely and said, "If you're as afraid as all that, wouldn't it have been better if you had both had a little less to say in the first place?"

That evening, however, when Hsi-men Ch'ing arrived home, she only said, "Hui-lien was hankering after her husband and cried all day long. Then, when everyone was busy in the rear compound, we don't even know when exactly, she committed suicide."

"She was just a foolish woman," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "who was not destined to be happy."

He sent a servant to the district magistrate, Li Ta-t'ien, with a written report of the incident, which stated:

> The said woman was responsible for the silver utensils during a feast for female guests in the household of the deponent and was unable to account for a silver cup. Fearing that the master of the house would investigate and punish her, she hanged herself until dead.

He also presented the magistrate with thirty taels of silver. For this reason the district magistrate was anxious to do him a favor and routinely dispatched the clerk from the office of punishment, along with a number of coroner's assistants, who conducted a perfunctory examination of the corpse. Hsi-men Ch'ing then purchased a coffin, obtained a red death certificate, and deputed Pen the Fourth and Lai-hsing to deliver the corpse to the Ksitigarbha Nunnery outside the South Gate to be cremated.

They gave the workers at the crematory five mace of silver for the purchase of additional fuel, and they were just about to light the fire when, who could have anticipated that Hui-lien's father, the coffin seller, Sung Jen, having heard what had happened, should arrive on the scene and put a stop to the proceedings. He loudly proclaimed that an injustice was being perpetrated and that his daughter had died under suspicious circumstances.

"Hsi-men Ch'ing," he claimed, "must surely have endeavored to force his attentions upon her. My daughter, wishing to preserve her honor, refused to go along with him, and he has coerced her into committing suicide. I plan to lodge formal appeals to the governor and the surveillance commissioner. Who dares to cremate the corpse?"

The workers promptly dispersed, not daring to carry out the cremation. Pen the Fourth and Lai-hsing had no alternative but to leave the coffin in the nunnery and return to report to Hsi-men Ch'ing. Truly:

> The Green Dragon and the White Tiger
> accompany each other;
> Good fortune and bad fortune cannot
> be safely predicted.[62]
>
> If you want to know the outcome of these events,
> Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 27

LI P'ING-ERH COMMUNICATES A SECRET IN THE KINGFISHER PAVILION; P'AN CHIN-LIEN ENGAGES IN A DRUNKEN ORGY UNDER THE GRAPE ARBOR

The Azure Heaven over our heads he would
  wantonly defy;
Taking peoples' lives[1] to gain possession
  of their wives.
You must know that his thousands of crafty and
  evil schemes;
Will only result in putting his own household
  in jeopardy.
Excess and debauchery have always arisen from
  ill-gotten wealth;
Avarice and anger, if one but repents, need not
  prevent salvation.
The Lord of Heaven still sees fit to let man
  propagate himself;
Despite the fact that human hearts remain so
  intractably perverse.[2]

THE STORY GOES that Lai-pao, on returning from his trip to the Eastern Capital, dismounted and went to the summerhouse to report to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

“On arriving in the Eastern Capital,” he said, “I first went to see the majordomo, Chai Ch’ien, who reports directly to the grand preceptor, and gave him your letter. Afterwards he took me to see the grand preceptor himself, who glanced at your communication and then had your presents taken inside. When this transaction was completed, he gave instructions that a letter should be written within a few days and dispatched posthaste to the grand coordinator of Shantung, Hou Meng,[3] directing him to release the salt merchant, Wang Ssu-feng, and the others, twelve men in all, who have been incarcerated in Ts’ang-chou. Uncle Chai also sent his respects to you and said that he hoped you would come to the capital yourself for the grand preceptor’s birthday on the fifteenth day of the sixth month, because there is something he would like to discuss with you.”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing heard this report he was utterly delighted. Lai-pao himself had profited from this trip to the tune of fifty taels of silver from the salt merchant Wang Ssu-feng. Hsi-men Ch’ing then sent him off to report the news to Ch’iao Hung. Who should appear at this juncture but Pen the Fourth and Lai-hsing. When they saw that Hsi-men Ch’ing was in the summerhouse talking to Lai-pao, they waited to one side.

As soon as Lai-pao had gone off to Ch’iao Hung’s house, Hsi-men Ch’ing asked Pen the Fourth, “Are you back already from taking care of the cremation?”

Pen the Fourth was too frightened to answer, but Lai-hsing came forward and:

Whispered into his ear in a low voice,

thus and so, “Sung Jen showed up at the crematory, laid claim to the corpse, and refused to let it be cremated. His language was so discourteous I would not dare repeat it.”

If Hsi-men Ch’ing had not heard about this, nothing might have happened, but having heard these words, he became enraged and cursed, “That dead duck of a ‘bare stick’! How contemptible can you get!”

Turning immediately to a page boy, he said, “Go fetch my son-in-law to write a note for me.”

He dispatched Lai-hsing to deliver the note to the district magistrate, Li Tat’ien, who forthwith deputed two lictors, with a length of rope, to haul Sung Jen before the bench, where he was charged with attempting a shakedown, relying on the corpse of the deceased in order to extort money. Right there in the courtroom he was put in the squeezers and given twenty strokes with the heavy bamboo, so severely that:

Fresh blood flowed copiously down his legs.

He was required to sign a legal recognizance forbidding him to make any further trouble for the household of Hsi-men Ch’ing. The local constable was also ordered to have the crematory workers, in the presence of someone from Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household, carry out the cremation forthwith and report back to the magistrate.

Sung Jen had been beaten so severely that his two legs were covered with wounds. When he returned home he developed an acute fever, contracted a seasonal ailment, and before a few days had passed:

Alas and alack,

he died. Truly, it was a case of:

A sleepy slugabed encountering the General
of the Five Ways;
A cold and hungry demon running into
Chung K’uei.[4]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

The greed and corruption of the district magistrate
are truly lamentable;
On receipt of gold and silk he is prepared to
commit any iniquity.[5]
Because of his daughter, Sung Jen is condemned to
tread the road to the shades;
The resentful souls of the victims of injustice
pervade the entire yamen.

No sooner had Hsi-men Ch'ing disposed of the case of Sung Hui-lien than he proceeded to get together three hundred taels of silver and engage Silversmith Ku, at the head of a considerable number of other silversmiths, to come to the summerhouse in his garden and create a piece in which four male figurines were depicted holding up a representation of the character for long life in honor of Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching's birthday. Each of the silver figures in this group was more than a foot high. He also had them manufacture two gold pitchers in the shape of the character for long life and obtained two sets of jade cups in the shape of peaches. It took less than half a month to get everything ready. Hsi-men Ch'ing unpacked the python robes that Lai-wang had had manufactured for him in Hang-chou but was still lacking a bolt of abaca linen and a python robe of light silk. He doled out the money and sent people looking for these items everywhere but was unable to find any of good quality and had to make do with the best they could find.

One day, on the twenty-eighth day of the fifth month, when the birthday presents had been properly packed up, he turned them over to Lai-pao and his manager, Wu Tien-en, and they departed from Ch'ing-ho district and set off for the Eastern Capital.[6] But no more of this.

Two days later it was the first day of the sixth month, the beginning of the dog days of summer. Truly:

> Great heat does not exceed that of the *wei*
> and *shen* days of the sixth month;
> Great cold does not exceed that of the *ch'ou*
> and *yin* days of the twelfth month.[7]

The weather was extremely hot. It was that time when:

> The "red raven" is at its zenith,
> An umbrella of fire suspended in space,
> Without half a speck of cloud cover,
> Melting rock and liquefying metal.[8]

A poet of yore has left us a poem that describes this heat:

Chu-jung has come from the south, whipping
his fiery dragon;
His flaming banners are all ablaze, turning
the heavens red.
The sun's wheel is at its zenith, immobilized,
refusing to move;
The myriad nations feel as though they are in
a red-hot furnace.
On the Five Peaks all verdure is parched,
the clouds obliterated;
The God of Waves, beneath the sea, is afraid
his domain will dry up.
Will that evening ever come when the metallic
autumn wind will blow;
And favor us by sweeping away the heat
from the world below?[9]

Your narrator would remark that in this world there are three kinds of people who fear the heat, and three kinds of people who do not fear the heat. What are the three kinds of people who fear the heat?

The first kind of people who fear the heat are the farmers in the countryside. Every day they till their fields and tread their dikes, pushing the plow and dragging the harrow. In order to meet the deadlines for the semiannual agricultural taxes, they must relinquish whatever surplus grain is in their storehouses. During the dog days of summer, if there is no rain for their fields, their hearts burn within them as though afire.

The second kind are the merchants who must travel in pursuit of trade. They are away from home for years on end,[10] peddling their safflower and gromwell, their beeswax and breath-sweetening lozenges.[11] On their shoulders they bear heavy burdens, with their hands they push cumbersome barrows. As they travel along the road, they become hungrier and hungrier, thirstier and thirstier. Their faces are bathed in sweat and saliva, their clothes are soaked

through, and they cannot find so much as an inch of shade. Truly it is rough going.

The third kind are the soldiers on the frontier. Their heads burdened with heavy helmets, their bodies clad in iron mail, when thirsty they lick the blood from their swords, when tired they rest on the pommels of their saddles.[12] They campaign for years on end without being able to return home. Their clothes are infested with lice, their wounds suppurate, and not an unscathed patch of skin remains on their bodies.[13]

These are the three kinds of people who fear the heat. There are also three kinds of people who do not fear the heat.

The first of these are those who dwell within the inner precincts of the imperial palace. By their waterside rotundas and breezy pavilions, serpentine streams form pools and flowing springs make ponds. Large pieces and small pieces of ornamental jade are juxtaposed to objects sculpted out of reversed-pattern rhinoceros horn.[14] By lapis lazuli balustrades are planted exotic fruits and rare flowers. In crystal basins are piled objects of agate and coral. On tables of inlaid crystal are arrayed inkstones from Tuan-ch'i, writing brushes with ivory stems,[15] ink cakes that once belonged to Ts'ang Chieh,[16] and note-paper designed by Ts'ai Yen,[17] as well as crystal brush racks and white jade paperweights. When suffering from ennui, such men compose rhapsodies and indite poems. When affected by drink, they take naps in the southern breeze.

And then there are the nobility and distaff relatives of the imperial house, the members of wealthy households and prominent families. Every day is spent in their "snow caves" and cool pavilions. All day long they occupy their breezy studios and waterside retreats. Their hanging screens are made of raddled "shrimps' whiskers," their bed curtains are fashioned of woven mermaid silk. Jasmine-scented pomanders are suspended in their quarters. On their beds of inlaid mother-of-pearl are spread cool mats of ripple-patterned bamboo and coral pillows adorned with mandarin ducks. Punkahs are everywhere in motion to stir up the air. Ready at hand are basins of ice water in which lie soaking submerged plums and

floating melons,[18] red caltrops and snowy lotus roots, bayberries and Chinese olives, apples and water chestnuts. And there are also flowerlike beauties[19] standing by to cool them with their fans.

And then there are the Taoist priests and Ch'an monks in their temples and monasteries, occupying their cloud-encroaching scripture halls and their skyscraping bell towers. In moments of leisure they resort to the abbot's cell to explicate the Way of Nirvana or recite *The Scripture of the Yellow Court*.[20] From time to time they visit their monastic gardens to pluck the peaches of immortality or exotic fruits. When suffering from ennui, they summon their acolytes and strum the zither athwart their knees in the shade of the pines. When affected by drink, they take along their chessboards and chat with their friends in the shade of the willows.

These are the three kinds of people who do not fear the heat. There is a poem that testifies to this:

The red sun blazes as if it would set
everything afire;
In the fields below half the crops are
withered and scorched.
The hearts of the farmers are like
seething caldrons:
While in their belvederes the nobles
ply their fans.[21]

When Hsi-men Ch'ing got up and saw how hot it was, he decided not to go out that day but to stay at home, leaving his hair undone and merely throwing on a tunic,[22] in order to avoid the heat. He went to his summerhouse in the garden, the Kingfisher Pavilion, and watched the page boys as they watered the flowers. What should he see, right in front of the Kingfisher Pavilion, but a planter of sweet-smelling daphne in full flower. Hsi-men Ch'ing had the page boy, Lai-an, fetch a small sprinkling can and looked on as he watered it.

At this juncture who should appear but P'an Chin-lien and Li P'ing-erh, dressed in their everyday garb of white silver-striped silk blouses and long trailing skirts of honey yellow silk brocade with a

drawnwork motif of “phoenixes traversing the flowers.” Li P’ing-erh was wearing a vest of scarlet abaca linen and Chin-lien one of pink, both of which were trimmed with purfled gold-spangled edging. Chin-lien was not wearing a formal headdress but had done her hair up into a casual “bag of silk” chignon in the Hang-chou style, fastened in place with a cloud-shaped ornament with kingfisher feather inlays. Two tufts of hair were allowed to escape at either temple, next to which, on the forehead of her powdered face, she had pasted three gold-flecked turquoise beauty patches, which served to further enhance her:

Powdered face and glossy hair,[23]
Ruby lips and white teeth.[24]

The two of them, holding hands and giggling to each other, suddenly arrived on the scene and saw Hsi-men Ch’ing supervising the watering of the flowers.

“So this is where you are,” they said, “seeing to the watering of the flowers. Why, you haven’t even done your hair yet!”

“Tell a maidservant to go fetch some water,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “I can do my hair right here.”

“Put your sprinkling can down,” said Chin-lien to Lai-an, “and go back to my room. Tell one of the maidservants to bring some water and a comb, and be quick about it. Your father wants to do his hair here.”

Lai-an assented and went off on his errand.

Chin-lien noticed the sweet-smelling daphne and was about to pick a blossom to stick in her hair when Hsi-men Ch’ing stopped her, saying, “Hands off, you crazy little oily mouth! I’ve got a blossom for each of you here.”

It so happened that Hsi-men Ch’ing had already plucked a few partly opened blossoms from the sides of the cluster and had put them to soak in a turquoise gallbladder-shaped porcelain vase.

“My child,” said Chin-lien with a laugh, “What do you mean plucking all these blossoms for yourself without presenting one to your mother?”

Thereupon, she snatched one of them, before he could give it to her, and stuck it in her hair. Hsi-men Ch'ing presented another one to Li P'ing-erh.

Who should appear at this juncture but Ch'un-mei, carrying a dressing mirror and comb, and Ch'iu-chü, with the water for him to wash his face in.

Hsi-men Ch'ing handed three of the blossoms to Ch'un-mei and instructed her, "Deliver these to Yüeh-niang, Li Chiao-erh, and Meng Yü-lou to wear in their hair, and ask the Third Lady to join us. Tell her I'd like to hear her play something for me on the moon guitar."

"Give the one for Meng the Third to me," said Chin-lien. "I'll deliver it to her. You can have Ch'un-mei deliver the ones for the First Lady and Li Chiao-erh and then come back. And give me one more of those blossoms for myself. Since I'm going to the trouble of calling the singing girl for you, I deserve another one."

"You go ahead," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "I'll give it to you when you come back."

"My child, whoever taught you to be so disingenuous?" said Chin-lien. "You think you can trick me into calling Meng the Third for you, and then you won't give me a thing. I won't go. You'll have to give it to me first before I'll go for her."

"You lousy little whore!" laughed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Even in something like this you've got to have your finger in the pie."

Thereupon, he gave her another blossom, and Chin-lien stuck it in the hair beside her temple. Only then did she consent to go off to the rear compound, leaving Li P'ing-erh alone with Hsi-men Ch'ing in the Kingfisher Pavilion.

Hsi-men Ch'ing observed that beneath her light silk skirt she was wearing scarlet silk underdrawers that were:

Delicately translucent,[25]

when she stood in the sunlight, exposing her:

Jade bones and icy flesh.[26]

Before he knew it, his:

Lecherous desires were suddenly aroused.

Seeing that:

There was nobody about,[27]

he neglected to comb his hair, but bending Li P'ing-erh over a cool-surfaced summer bench:

Turned up her beige skirt,

Took down her red drawers,

and, stooping over her back, proceeded to:

Poke up the fire on the other side of the mountains.

He kept at it for some time and had not yet ejaculated, as the two of them:

Enjoyed to the full the pleasures of connubial bliss.

Who could have anticipated that P'an Chin-lien did not actually go back to the rear compound to call Yü-lou but went only as far as the postern gate leading out of the garden and then turned over Meng Yü-lou's blossom to Ch'un-mei to deliver for her. She thought for a while and then retraced her steps, silently tiptoeing up to the latticework window of the Kingfisher Pavilion in order to eavesdrop on the events within. She continued to eavesdrop for some time and could tell that the two of them inside were just in the thick of things.

"Dear heart," she overheard Hsi-men Ch'ing saying to Li P'ing-erh, "Your daddy doesn't love anything else so much as this delectable white bottom of yours. Today you're letting your daddy enjoy it to the full."

After some time, she heard Li P'ing-erh say in a low voice, "My own daddy! Don't bang away at me quite so hard. I'm feeling poorly in my present condition. You were a little too rough with me the last time and left me with a pain in the lower abdomen that has only begun to get better in the last few days."

"What do you mean," asked Hsi-men Ch'ing, "when you say you're feeling poorly in your present condition?"

"I won't keep you in the dark any longer," said Li P'ing-erh. "I'm expecting and am already approaching my final month of pregnancy. So please go a little easy with me."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard these words he was utterly delighted and said, "Dear heart! Why didn't you tell me before? If that's the way it is, your daddy will be content to make only a casual game of it. Thereupon:

When pleasure reaches its height passions are intense;
Responding to her with abandon,[28]

he gripped her around the hips with both hands and:

Ejaculated like a geyser.[29]

The woman, from underneath, arched her hips, the better to receive his semen.

Some time elapsed, during which all that could be heard was Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Panting and puffing,

and the woman:

Cooing softly like an oriole.

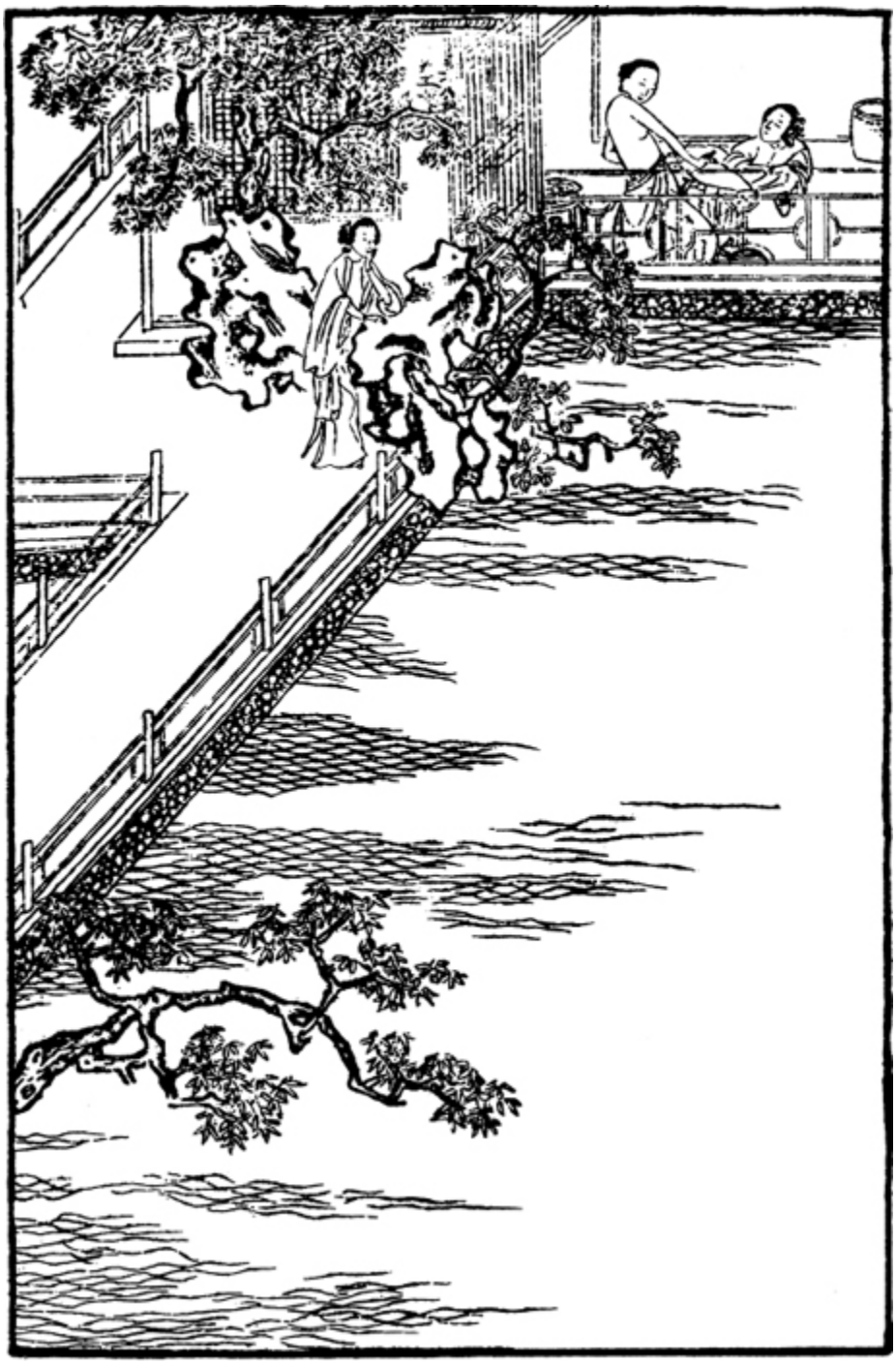
All of this was so clearly overheard by Chin-lien from her vantage point outside the window that she might well have ejaculated:

"Is it not delightful?"

While she was still listening, who should appear but Meng Yü-lou, who suddenly arrived from the rear compound and said, "Slavey Five, what are you doing here?"

Chin-lien silenced her with a negative wave of the hand, and the two of them then proceeded to walk into the summerhouse together. Hsi-men Ch'ing was so flustered he hardly knew what to do with himself.

"I've been gone half the day," Chin-lien said to him, "and what have you been up to? It seems you haven't even combed your hair or washed your face yet."



Li P’ing-erh Communicates a Secret in the Kingfisher Pavilion

“I’ve been waiting for a maidservant to bring the jasmine soap,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “so I could wash my face.”

“I’d just be wasting my breath on you,” said Chin-lien. “You’re so insistent on having that particular soap for your ablutions, it’s no

wonder your face has been scrubbed even whiter than a certain person's bottom."

Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this remark, but chose to ignore it.

Later, after he had done his hair and washed his face, he sat down with Yü-lou, and asked, "What have you been up to in the rear compound? Did you bring the moon guitar with you?"

"I've been in the master suite," said Yü-lou, "stringing pearls and other ornaments for Elder Sister to wear in her hair when she goes to the tea-present ceremony for her nephew Wu Shun-ch'en's bride-to-be, Third Sister Cheng, a few days from now.[30] Ch'un-mei has gone to fetch the moon guitar."

Before long, Ch'un-mei showed up and said, "I've delivered the blossoms to the First Lady and the Second Lady and they've acknowledged them."

Hsi-men Ch'ing then told her to prepare some wine for them.

It was not long before:

> In basins of ice water there lay soaking,
> Submerged plums and floating melons;
> In cool pavilions he indulged himself,
> Cuddling the red and hugging the turquoise.[31]

"Why don't you send Ch'un-mei to invite Elder Sister to join us?" said Yü-lou.

"She doesn't like to drink," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "There's no point in inviting her."

The four of them then settled down to make a party of it. Hsi-men Ch'ing sat in the place of honor, and the three women ranged themselves to either side. Truly, it is a case of:

> The finest vintage poured from the flagon,
> The rarest delicacies graced the platter.

P'an Chin-lien refused to sit on her chair but sat down on a pea-green cool porcelain taboret instead.

"Sister Five," said Meng Yü-lou, "come over and sit on this chair. I'm afraid that cool taboret may give you a chill."

“It doesn’t matter,” said Chin-lien. “Old as I am, and without any fetus to chill, what is there to worry about?”

After a while, when:

Three rounds of wine had been consumed,

Hsi-men Ch’ing told Ch’un-mei to fetch the moon guitar for Yü-lou to play and the *p’i-p’a* for Chin-lien and said, “You two sing me the song suite that begins with the tune ‘Cries of the Wild Geese in Flight’ and opens with the words:

The Red Emperor holds sway, ablaze
in the Great Void.”[32]

Chin-lien refused, saying, “My child, whoever taught you to be so disingenuous? If we sing, the two of you will have nothing to do but enjoy yourselves. I won’t do it, unless Sister Li also has an instrument to play.”

“But she doesn’t know how to play anything,” protested Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“If she can’t play,” said Chin-lien, “let her stand to one side and keep time with the clappers.”

“This little whore!” laughed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “All she ever does is pick nits.”

He instructed Ch’un-mei to go fetch a pair of red ivory clappers and had Li P’ing-erh agree to hold them in her hand.

Then the two musicians, with Yü-lou’s maidservant, Hsiu-ch’un, standing by to cool them with her fan:

Deftly extended their slender fingers,
Gently strummed the silken strings,

and sang together, to the tune “Cries of the Wild Geese in Flight”:

The Red Emperor holds sway, ablaze
in the Great Void.

When they had finished singing, Hsi-men Ch’ing presented each of them with a cup of wine.

As the party continued, P'an Chin-lien made herself conspicuous by the assiduity with which she gulped down ice water and devoured fresh fruit.

"Sister Five," protested Yü-lou, "how come you're consuming only fresh cold things today?"

"Old as I am," laughed Chin-lien, "there's nothing of any consequence going on in *my* belly, so why should I worry about eating cold or glutinous things?"

This so embarrassed Li P'ing-erh that her face became a patchwork of red and white blotches.

Hsi-men Ch'ing gave Chin-lien a look and said, "You little whore! All you ever do is talk nonsense."

"You've got too much to say yourself," said Chin-lien. "After all, I'm only like:

The bedridden old woman trying to eat cured meat:
I can only cope with a single shred at a time.

What's it to you, anyway?"

As they continued drinking, all of a sudden:

Clouds massed in the southeast,
Fog obscured the northwest.[33]
Thunder rumbled indistinctly,[34] and
A heavy downpour occurred,

as a result of which the flowers and vegetation in front of the summerhouse were completely soaked. Truly:

The waters of the Yangtze, Yellow, Huai, and Chi Rivers
  are newly augmented;
The emerald bamboo and the red pomegranate blossoms
  are rendered pristine.[35]

Before long the rain stopped, the remnant of a rainbow hung suspended in the distant sky, and a glimpse of the sun reappeared in the west. Truly, it is a case of:

The passing of a fine rain imparts a sheen to the
  azure promontory;

The cooling of an evening breeze enhances the purity
of the courtyard.

Who should appear at this juncture but Hsiao-yü, who came out from the rear compound looking for Meng Yü-lou.

“Elder Sister wants my help,” Yü-lou explained. “There are still some pearls and ornaments that need to be strung. I’d better go or she’ll be annoyed with me.”

“The two of us can go together,” said Li P’ing-erh. “I want to see how Elder Sister is doing with the stringing of the pearls and ornaments too.”

“Let’s give you a send-off,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Thereupon, he picked up the moon guitar and gave it to Yü-lou to play while he clapped his hands in accompaniment as they all sang together, to the tune “Liang-chou Prelude”:

As evening falls, rain passes over the
southern pavilion,
Disordering the rouged surface
of the pond.
Spring thunder rumbles indistinctly;
The rain is over and the clouds disperse.[36]
For ten li, the fragrance of lotus blossoms
pervades the senses;
The new moon is a solitary hook.
The beauty of this scene is infinite.
Emerging from the orchid-scented water,
Her evening makeup mussed,
It is dusk in the secluded courtyard, and
she is too languid to sleep.

Chorus:

Sing “Golden Threads,”[37]
Drain “azure funnels,”[38]
By icy mountains and snowy balustrades,
prepare to feast.

How many people live to see
such times of peace?

They continued to sing to the same tune with a modified opening:

In the shade of the willows, the stridulation
of the new cicada resounds,
Flittering fireflies become visible as they
invade the courtyard.
Somewhere the song of caltrop gatherers is heard,
Returning at evening in their painted boats.
Behold, the stars of the “Jade Rope”
hang low,[39]
Within red gates there is no sound.[40]
This scene is even more to be envied.
Rising, he takes her by the silk-white hand,[41]
And straightens her coiffure.
The moon shines on the gauze-curtained bedstead,
but they are not yet asleep.

Chorus:

Sing “Golden Threads,”
Drain “azure funnels,”
By icy mountains and snowy balustrades,
prepare to feast.
How many people live to see
such times of peace?

They continued to sing to the tune “Higher Ever Higher”:

Amid the ripples, mandarin ducks play,[42]
Overturning the green lotus leaves;
Pure fragrance is wafted abroad as
jeweled drops spatter.
A perfumed breeze fans,
The banks of the fragrant pond,

Beside the secluded pavilion.
Sitting here, quite unawares, one's
spirits are refreshed.
What need is there for Gardens of Paradise
or Isles of the Blest?

Chorus:

We only fear the west wind will once more
surprise us with autumn;
Before we know it, all unobserved, the
flowing years have passed.[43]

As they sang, before they knew it, they had arrived at the postern gate. Meng Yü-lou handed her moon guitar to Ch'un-mei and went back to the rear compound with Li P'ing-erh.

"Meng the Third," P'an Chin-lien called after her, "wait for me. I'm coming too."

She was about to abandon Hsi-men Ch'ing and go with the others, when he reached out and grabbed her with one hand, saying, "Little oily mouth, you may be slippery, but I'm not going to let you get away."

He gave her such a tug as he spoke that it was a wonder she didn't lose her footing.

"You crazy good-for-nothing!" said the woman. "I'*m* fully dressed. Haven't you seen enough of my arm by now? Tiresome child! The two of them are both gone. I wonder what you want to keep me around for."

"Let's get some wine," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and have a game of pitch-pot[44] here under the T'ai-hu rockery, just for the fun of it. Come, share three cups with me."

"You crazy good-for-nothing!" the woman exclaimed. "If we're going to play at pitch-pot, let's do it in the pavilion. Why do it here, of all places? If you don't believe me, just try it out on that little piece, Ch'un-mei. She won't even fetch the wine for you."

Hsi-men Ch'ing told Ch'un-mei to run this errand for them, and Ch'un-mei relinquished the moon guitar to her mistress and went nonchalantly off without more ado.

The woman took the moon guitar in her hand and strummed at it a while, saying, "I've had Meng the Third teach me a few lines."

As she was playing she noticed that beside the T'ai-hu rockery there was a pomegranate blossom in full bloom after the rain.

Playfully plucking a sprig, she stuck it on one side of her cloudy locks,[45] saying:

"Not having had a bite for three days,
I've got flowers before my eyes."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this, he stepped forward and, hoisting her two tiny golden lotuses into the air, threatened mischievously, "You little whore! If I didn't care for the opinion of the world, I'd fuck you to death."

"You crazy good-for-nothing!" the woman retorted. "Cut the kidding. Wait till I get rid of this moon guitar."

Thereupon, she casually leaned the moon guitar against the side of the raised flower bed and said, "My child, the more demanding you get, the less likely you are to succeed. Just now you've been off screwing around with Li P'ing-erh and don't know how to cover your embarrassment. What do you want to pester me for?"

"You crazy slave!" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "All you ever do is talk nonsense. Who's been up to anything with her?"

"My child," the woman said:

"No matter what you do, you cannot deceive the
local tutelary god.

Who do you think your mother is, that you should try to deceive me? While I was off delivering that blossom in the rear compound, those were fine doings the two of you were up to."

"You crazy little whore!" exclaimed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Cut the nonsense."

Thereupon, bending her down beneath the flower bed, he gave her a kiss.

The woman promptly responded by sticking her tongue into his mouth.

"If you call me 'My own daddy,' " said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I'll forgive you and let you up."

The woman found him to be too much for her and said, "My own daddy!
I'm not the one you're after, so what are you pestering me for?"

As for the two of them, truly:

Inspired by sunshine, the oriole's tongue
displays its virtuosity;
Moistened with rain, the flowery branch is
more than ever enticing.[46]

After the two of them had toyed with each other for a while, the woman said, "Why don't we go over by the grape arbor and play our game of pitch-pot there. Come on, let's go."

Thereupon, balancing the moon guitar on one arm as she walked, she played the concluding song to the suite that begins with "Liang-chou Prelude," to the tune "Higher Ever Higher":

On this clear evening, hearts are light;
it is gloriously cool;
Moonlight bathes the Pure Empty Hall
on the Jasper Terrace.[47]
Immortal lovers,
Spread tortoiseshell mats,
For yet another revel.
Let the silver arrows of the jade clepsydra
press forward as they may,
The sounds of pipe and song will continue
in the Crystal Palace.[48]

Chorus:

We only fear the west wind will once more
surprise us with autumn;

Before we know it, all unobserved, the
flowing years have passed.

Coda:

Light and darkness alternate swiftly,
like lightning flashes;
Even this wonderful evening is, alas,
drawing to its end.
Risk everything for pleasure, as song
and laughter resound.[49]

Day after day, a feast among the flowers;
Night after night, jade damsels as companions.
How long a span of life are we allotted?
What are we to do if not enjoy it?[50]

The two of them walked along shoulder to shoulder. Before long they had made their way around the azure pool, skirted the banksia rose trellis, passed in front of the Kingfisher Pavilion, and arrived at the grape arbor. They opened their eyes wide and took a good look and, truly, it was a fine grape arbor. Behold:

On all sides are carved balustrades
and stone masonry;
On every hand the emerald leaves
are densely massed.
Glaucous hues greet the eyes,
A thousand clusters of purple pellets
dangle like beaded tassels;
Autumn scents assail the nostrils,
Ten thousand banks of green cloud
trail brocaded sashes.
Suspended “mare teats”:[51]
These crystal spheres contain
carnelian juice;
Tumbling green pearls:

The gilded arbor is decked with
emerald drapes.
These species have been transplanted
from the Western Regions;
Their fragrance has been cultivated
in the Sweet Springs Palace.[52]

Truly:

In all four seasons it is embellished by
rare blossoms on flowering trees,
The bright moon and clear breeze cannot
be purchased at any price.[53]

It so happened that when the two of them arrived underneath the grape arbor, they found that four cool porcelain taborets had been placed there with a bronze vessel for the game of pitch-pot to one side. Chin-lien leaned the moon guitar against one of the taborets and started to play pitch-pot with Hsi-men Ch'ing.

At this juncture, what should they see in the distance but Ch'un-mei bringing the wine and Ch'iu-chü toting a box of delicacies, with a bowl of iced fruit on top of it.

"You little piece!" the woman exclaimed. "You went off in a huff just a minute ago. How come, now, you're delivering the goods after all?"

"We've been looking all over the place for you," Ch'un-mei complained. "Who could have anticipated that you'd sneak over here?"

Ch'iu-chü put down her burden and left.

Hsi-men Ch'ing opened the box and found it divided into eight compartments with a different delicacy in each. One compartment contained goose gizzards and goose feet preserved in a fermented mash. One contained shreds of cured meat that had been pressed into laminated sheets and bundled together like the pages of a document. One contained preserved whitebait flavored with osmanthus. One contained split sun-dried pullet breasts and wings. One contained fresh lotus seeds. One contained fresh walnut meats. One contained fresh caltrops. And one contained fresh water

chestnuts. There were also a small silver flagon of grape wine[54] with a spout shaped like the crop on the neck of a bird, two tiny gold cups in the shape of lotus seedpods, and two pairs of ivory chopsticks.

When these things had been set out on a low cool-surfaced table, Hsi-men Ch'ing and the woman sat down across from each other and continued to amuse themselves at pitch-pot. They played the variations called "Crossing the Bridge," "Inserting the Arrow Upside Down," "A Pair of Wild Geese in Flight," "Passing the Examinations and Qualifying for Office," "The Two Ch'iao Sisters Read a Book,"[55] "Yang Kuei-fei Takes a Spring Nap," "The Black Dragon Penetrates the Cave," and "Rolling the Pearl Curtain Bottom Side Up."[56]

By the time they had played ten games or more, the woman had become quite drunk. Before she knew it:

> Peach blossoms had bloomed upon her cheeks, and
> Amorous glances escaped the corners of her eyes.

Hsi-men Ch'ing still wanted to drink some medicated Five Spice Wine[57] and sent Ch'un-mei to fetch it.

"Little oily mouth," Chin-lien said, "please do me another favor while you're at it. Go to my room and bring a cool bamboo bed mat and a pillow. I'm completely pooped and would like to lie down here for a while."

Deliberately affecting the coquetry of a spoiled child, Ch'un-mei said, "Enough is enough! Haven't I already got my hands full with all these errands? Who's got the energy to go fetch anything for you too?"

"If you don't want to do it," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "just tell Ch'iu-chü to bring them here while you go after the wine."

Ch'un-mei went off, shaking her head as she went.

After what seemed like half a day, Ch'iu-chü was the first to appear, holding a cool bamboo bed mat, a pillow, and a quilt in her arms.

"Put the bedding down," the woman instructed her, "and latch the garden gate on your way out. Then go look after the room, and don't come back unless I call for you."

Ch’iu-chü nodded in assent, put down the bedding, and went off straightaway.

Hsi-men Ch’ing thereupon stood up, took off his jade-colored silk tunic, hung it over the balustrade, and went over under the flower trellis beside the juniper hedge on the west side of the peony bed to relieve himself.

By the time he returned, the woman had already unrolled the cool bamboo mat and positioned the pillow and quilt to her satisfaction. She had stripped herself so that not a stitch of silk remained on her body, above or below, and was reclining face-up on the mat, wearing scarlet shoes on her feet, and cooling herself with a white silk fan that she held in her hand.

When Hsi-men Ch’ing came back and beheld this sight, how could it help but:

Stimulate his lecherous desires?

Thereupon, exhilarated by the wine, he took off his own clothes, above and below, sat down on a cool porcelain taboret, and started out by titillating her clitoris with his toe. He titillated it to such effect that her vaginal fluids began to flow, like a snail secreting its slime.[58] He then took off the woman’s red embroidered shoes, unwound her foot bindings, and amused himself by using them to suspend her two feet from the grape arbor overhead, so that she looked just like “A Golden Dragon Extending Its Claws.” As a result:

Her vaginal orifice was greatly distended,
Her “Red Hook” was completely exposed, and
Her “Chicken Tongue” protruded from within.

Hsi-men Ch’ing started out by stooping over her and placing his jade chowrie handle[59] inside the mouth of her vagina,[60] thus demonstrating the position known as “Inserting the Arrow Upside Down.” Supporting himself with one hand on her pillow, he proceeded to thrust with all his strength. He continued to thrust until her vaginal secretions flowed uninterruptedly, making a sound like a school of loaches plunging through the mud.[61] The woman, from underneath, inarticulately called out, “Daddy!” unceasingly.

Just as they were approaching the height of bliss, who should appear but Ch'un-mei, who had come with the heated wine. As soon as she saw what was happening, she put down the wine flagon and fled straight to the top of the artificial hill, the highest point in the garden, where she leaned over a chess table in the Cloud Repose Pavilion and toyed with the chess pieces.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing looked up and saw where she had gone, he beckoned to her with his hand but was unable to induce her to come down.

"Little oily mouth!" he exclaimed. "If I can't get you down here, I might as well give up."

Thereupon, abandoning the woman, he set off in pursuit, but by the time he had run up the stone steps in great strides, all the way to the pavilion on the summit, Ch'un-mei had come down by way of a winding "sheep's-gut" path on the right side of the hill, passed through the whitewashed "snow cave" of Hidden Spring Grotto, and arrived at the Dripping Emerald Cavern halfway down in the "waist" of the hill, where the flowering vegetation was at its thickest.

Just as she was in the act of hiding there, Hsi-men Ch'ing unexpectedly caught sight of her and, embracing her around the waist as she stood in the shadows, said, "Little oily mouth! I've got you after all."

He then lightly picked her up and carried her down to the grape arbor where, saying with a laugh, "You must have a cup of wine," he proceeded to sit her down on his lap and the two of them passed a cup of it back and forth between them.

When Ch'un-mei saw that the woman's two feet were suspended from the arbor, she said, "What do the two of you think you're up to? In broad daylight too! If anyone should happen along and catch you in the act it would look most unbecoming."

"Was the postern gate closed or not?"[62] Hsi-men Ch'ing asked.

"I put the latch on it when I came in," said Ch'un-mei.

"Little oily mouth," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "you can look on as I play a game of 'pitching into the fleshly pot.' This variation is called

‘Shooting the Silver Goose with a Golden Pellet.’ You watch; for every pellet that hits the target I’ll drink a cup of wine.”

Thereupon, he reached into the bowl of ice water for a jade-yellow “imperial damson” plum[63] and pitched it at the orifice of the woman’s vagina. He pitched three of these in a row and each of them struck the clitoris. Hsi-men Ch’ing accordingly downed three cups of the medicated Five Spice Wine. He also had Ch’un-mei pour a cup of wine and give it to the woman to drink.

Hsi-men Ch’ing then inserted a damson plum into the woman’s vagina and neither removed it nor proceeded to any further action, which had the effect of arousing the woman until:

Her amorous desires were in a tumult, and
Her vaginal fluids began to overflow,

but she was too embarrassed to call out. Instead:

Her starry eyes grew dim, and
Her four limbs lay inert upon pillow and mat.[64]

Finally she called out:

Her oriole’s voice all aquaver,

“What a cruel lover! You’ll do me to death yet.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing paid no attention to her but told Ch’un-mei to stand by and cool him with a fan as he devoted himself to the wine. As the cups passed back and forth, he continued to drink until he ended up reclining faceup on a “Drunken Old Gentleman’s” lounge chair and fell fast asleep.

As soon as Ch’un-mei saw that he was in a drunken stupor, she came over to make sure by giving him an experimental caress and then disappeared in a cloud of dust through the whitewashed “snow cave” on her way back to the rear compound. She heard someone calling to get in through the postern gate, and when she opened it, it turned out to be Li P’ing-erh.

No one disturbed Hsi-men Ch’ing’s nap, and he slept for about two hours before waking up. When he opened his eyes he saw that the woman’s two fresh white legs were still splayed to either side as they hung suspended from the grape arbor overhead.

Unable to restrain his lust,[65]

he noticed that Ch'un-mei was no longer in evidence and, turning to the woman, said, "All right, I'll let you have it now."

Thereupon, he first fished the damson plum out of her vagina and made the woman eat it. Then he sat down on a pillow, pulled the bag of sexual implements out of the wallet attached to his silk jacket, and fastened in place first the silver clasp and then the sulfur-imbrued ring.[66]

At first he only dallied back and forth in the mouth of her vagina, refusing to penetrate deeply, which had the effect of arousing the woman until she arched her back in response to his every movement, while crying out unceasingly, "Daddy, hurry up and get inside! You're driving this whore of yours crazy! I know you're upset with me on account of Li P'ing-erh and are deliberately pulling out the stops to teach me a lesson. After what you've put me through today, I won't dare defy you anymore."

"You little whore," laughed Hsi-men Ch'ing, "as long as you understand what's what, we can negotiate the better."[67]

Thereupon, after titillating her clitoris a little further, he withdrew his organ, opened the bag from his wallet, picked out a glob of the aphrodisiac ointment called "Amorous Cries of Boudoir Beauties"[68] with his finger and thumb, and, daubing it in the mouth of his urethra, plunged the object into her vagina and gave a few thrusts with it. In no time at all his organ became proud and firm.



P’an Chin-lien Engages in a Drunken Orgy under the Grape Arbor

Its protuberances swelled and its head sprang up, as it became engorged with rage. Hsi-men Ch’ing:

Bent his head the better to observe,
The coming and going, thrusting and retraction;[69]

Savoring the sight as it went in and out.[70]

As the woman lay beside the pillow:

Her starry eyes grew dim, and
She moaned incessantly,

inarticulately calling out, “My big-dicked daddy! What are you up to? Go all the way in and be done with it. The itch in the clitoris of the cunt of this whore of yours has entered into the marrow of her bones. Take pity on me and let me off for now.”

In the mouth of this whore no expression, no matter how unspeakably obscene, was left unsaid.

As for Hsi-men Ch’ing, once he got started he was good for three or four hundred thrusts at a time. Supporting himself facedown on the pillow and mat with both hands, arching his back and exerting all his strength, responding to her movements and raising himself to the task, he retracted his organ as far as its neck and plunged it in all the way up to the root another hundred times or so.[71] The woman, from underneath, used a napkin to wipe away her vaginal secretions, but they continued to flow, as a result of which the mat was completely soaked. Hsi-men Ch’ing alternately submerged and exposed the knob of his glans, moving back and forth and teasing her without mercy.

Turning to the woman, he said, “I’m going to demonstrate the position known as ‘The Old Monk Rings the Dinner Bell.’ ”

All of a sudden, he arched his back and lunged forward, thrusting himself inside her until the tip of his organ penetrated all the way to her cervix. The cervix is the innermost recess of the vaginal chamber and contains a fleshy growth like the budding pistil of a flower. When the glans of his penis penetrates to this point without being deflected, the man will feel a melting sensation the pleasure of which is indescribable.[72]

The woman was hurt and responded with a sudden upward buck of her body, as a result of which, what could be heard but a cracking sound as the sulfur-imbrued ring broke inside her. As for the woman:

Her eyes dimmed, her respiration slowed,

The sound of her breathing was barely audible,
The tip of her tongue became ice-cold, and
Her four limbs lay inert upon the mat.[73]

Hsi-men Ch'ing became alarmed and hastily unfastened the foot bindings by which her feet were suspended from the arbor. He then fished the sulfur-imbrued ring and the "titillating bell" out of her vagina and broke them in two.

Thereupon, he helped the woman into a sitting position, and it was only after what seemed like half a day that:

Her starry eyes flashed open with surprise,[74]

and she gradually came back to her senses.

She then turned to Hsi-men Ch'ing and said, with coquettish tears,[75] "My own daddy! How could you be so cruel to me today? You almost cost me my life. From now on you must never do anything like that again.

It would be no laughing matter.

As it is:

My head feels so dizzy,
I hardly know where I am."[76]

Noticing that the sun was already sinking in the west, Hsi-men Ch'ing hastily helped her on with her clothes and called for Ch'un-mei and Ch'iu-chü to put away the bedding and help him get her back to her room.

Ch'un-mei returned to the garden to oversee Ch'iu-chü as she cleared up the tableware from the feast. Just as she was about to close the garden gate, the head servant Lai-chao's son, Little Iron Rod, came scrambling out from underneath the flower trellis and pestered her for some fruit to eat.

"Where did you come from, you little jailbird?" said Ch'un-mei, giving him a few damson plums and peaches. "Your father's drunk. Hadn't you better get back to the front of the compound? If he sees you, I fear, you're likely to get a beating."

The little monkey took the fruit and went off straightaway. Ch'un-mei closed the garden gate and then went back to the room where she helped Hsi-men Ch'ing and the woman as they:

Got into bed and prepared to sleep.
But no more of this. Truly:

In the morning he attends feasts in Golden Valley,[77]
In the evening he favors beauties in ornate houses.
But do not consider these to be occasions for joy,
Time's flowing light only chases the sunset clouds.[78]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 28

CH'EN CHING-CHI TEASES CHIN-LIEN ABOUT A SHOE; HSI-MEN CH'ING ANGRILY BEATS LITTLE IRON ROD

In tempestuous surroundings it is hard
to maintain one's footing;
In one's way of coping with the world
do not be too demanding.[1]
Everything that happens goes wrong
on account of haste;
One's heart should ever seek to find
contentment in quietude.
Where the road is level one can proceed
in greater safety;
When people's feelings are constant they
will withstand scrutiny.
Just as it seems that, first to last,
there is nothing to regret;
No sooner are the branches formed than
they begin to proliferate.[2]

THE STORY GOES that after Hsi-men Ch'ing had helped the woman into her room he took off his own clothes, above and below, wearing nothing but a short undershirt of thin floss silk and leaving the rest of his body stark naked. The woman wore nothing but a bodice of thin red silk. The two of them sat down:

Shoulder to shoulder and thigh over thigh;
Refilled their empty cups, and
Resumed drinking the fragrant wine.

Putting an arm around her powdered neck, Hsi-men Ch'ing proceeded to drink with her, passing the same cup back and forth between them.

They could not have been more affectionate.

Looking at the woman out of the corner of his eye, he saw that:

Her cloudy locks were somewhat askew,[3]
Her creamy breasts were half exposed,[4]
Her captivating eyes were all a blur, so that
She resembled a drunken Yang Kuei-fei.

With her slender fingers she toyed uninterruptedly with the organ that lay between his loins until:

The organ started up in response.[5]

It still had the silver clasp fastened around it, but, limp, flaccid, and limber:

It was tumid and long.[6]

"Are you still fooling around with him?" Hsi-men Ch'ing joked. "It's all your fault, earlier, for scaring him into such a dumbstruck fit."

"What do you mean by 'a dumbstruck fit'?" the woman asked.

"If he's not having a dumbstruck fit," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "how come he's so flaccid and feverish that he can't even stand up for himself? You'd better get down on your knees and see what a little coaxing will do."

The woman gave him a laughing glance and then, squatting down and pillowing her head on one of his thighs, proceeded to tie the waist-string from his underpants around the base of his organ.

Taking it in her hand, she addressed it, saying, "You rascal, you! Just a little while ago you were so heady and wide-eyed you made me dizzy, and now you pretend to be having a dumbstruck fit and play dead."

After she had manipulated it for a while, she laid it against her powdered cheek and brushed it back and forth for some time before putting it in her mouth and sucking it.[7] She then proceeded to explore the mouth of his urethra with the tip of her tongue, and in no time at all his organ became engorged with rage.

In the bursting melon-head the sunken eye
grows round;
Trailing its side whiskers the body swells
itself erect.[8]

Hsi-men Ch'ing sat up on the pillow and ordered the woman to remain on all fours inside the gauze mosquito netting and suck away:

In order to augment his pleasure.[9]

Before long:

His lewd excitement was rekindled,[10]

and he engaged her in intercourse another time.

The woman pled with him, saying, "Daddy, let me off for now! Do you really mean to pester me again?"

That night the two of them:

Indulged their lusts without restraint.

There is a poem that testifies to this:

The battle at its height, joy reaches its zenith,
the clouds and rain disperse.
Her captivating eyes are all a blur.
Holding the jade stalk in her hand,
it remains as hard as ever.
She pleads with her talented gentleman,
"Take it easy just a bit!"
Urging each other to drain the golden cup to the dregs,[11]
Both of them are passionate, "half drunk, half crazed."

Her snow-white jade body is visible
through the bed curtains;[12]

Her mouth is like a cherry, her fingers
  are like reeds.
A single rivulet flows between them,
  each drop distinct;
Their mutual feelings are enmeshed,[13]
  deluded by lust.
Tossed first this way and then that,
  fish nibble at the algae;
Slowly advancing and lightly retreating,
  the cat devours the chick.
So long as the "divine turtle" does not disgorge
  the water of its sweet spring;
How can the Goddess of the Moon be induced to
  temporarily disengage.

Of the events of that evening there is no more to tell.

The next day Hsi-men Ch'ing went out, and it was almost lunchtime before the woman got up. Taking off the pair of sleeping shoes she had on, she looked around for the pair of red ones she had worn the day before:

Trying first this and then that,

but was unable to find one of them.

She asked Ch'un-mei about it, and she said, "Yesterday, when Father and I helped you inside, it was Ch'iu-chü who brought in your bedding."

The woman called for Ch'iu-chü and asked her about it.

"Yesterday," Ch'iu-chü said, "I didn't see you wearing any shoes when you came in."

"What rubbish!" the woman said. "If I wasn't wearing any shoes when I came in, do you mean to say that I came in barefooted?"

"Mother," said Ch'iu-chü, "if you had your shoes on, why aren't they here in the house?"

"You lousy slave!" the woman cursed at her, "still playing the innocent, are you? But if it is here in the house, you'd better give it a thorough going over."

Ch'iu-chü searched everywhere, in all three rooms, on top of the beds and under the beds, but was unable to come up with the missing shoe.

"It seems this house of mine is haunted," said the woman. "Some demon has made off with this shoe of mine, I suppose. If you can't even keep track of the shoes I wear on my feet, what do I need a slave like you in the house for, anyway?"

"Maybe you've just forgotten," said Ch'iu-chü, "that you left it somewhere in the garden, and didn't have it on when you came in."

"No doubt I was screwed silly!" the woman said, "And didn't even know whether I had my shoes on my feet or not."

Then she called for Ch'un-mei and said, "Take this lousy slave into the garden and have her conduct a search. If she comes up with it, that will be that; but if she fails to come up with my shoe, make her kneel down in the courtyard with a stone balanced on her head."

Ch'un-mei escorted her all over the garden, including the vicinity of the grape arbor, but, search as she would, there was not a shoe to be found. Truly:

> It was just as if one of the six Ting gods[14]
> had stolen it away;
> Amid the reed catkins, by bright moonlight,
> it was hard to find.[15]

After searching the entire garden, they returned empty-handed.

Ch'un-mei mocked her, saying, "You slave, you're in the same pickle now as:

> The go-between who lost her way: you've no
> occasion to speak; or
> Dame Wang who sold her grindstone: you've no way
> to grind your axe."[16]

"It's uncanny," said Ch'iu-chü. "Who could have made off with Mother's shoe? I didn't see her wearing any shoes when she came in. I wouldn't be surprised if when you opened the garden gate yesterday you let someone in who picked up Mother's shoe."

Ch'un-mei responded by spitting a thick glob of saliva in her face and cursing at her, "You lousy slave! You've been seeing things. And now you're trying to drag me into it. When the Sixth Lady called to open the gate, I shouldn't have opened it, I suppose! But you would have it that I let someone in. It was you who brought in her bedding and didn't check things out properly, and you still have the nerve to shoot your mouth off."

Ch'un-mei then escorted Ch'iu-chü back to the house and reported to her mistress, "She didn't find the shoe."

The woman told her to take her out to the courtyard and make her kneel down there.

Ch'iu-chü started to cry, saying, "Let me go make another search of the garden. If I fail to find it this time, Mother can beat me if she likes."

"Don't you believe her," said Ch'un-mei. "The garden grounds have been swept as clean as can be. Even a needle could have been found there. What chance is there of turning up a shoe?"

"Wait till I fail to find it," said Ch'iu-chü, "and then let mother beat me. Why do you have to keep on wagging your tongue on the sidelines?"

"All right," the woman said to Ch'un-mei. "You go along with this slave and see where she goes to look for it."

Ch'un-mei once again escorted her on a round of the garden, including the "snow caves" underneath the artificial hill, the flower beds, and the juniper hedge, but it was not to be found. Ch'iu-chü began to panic, and Ch'un-mei gave her a couple of boxes on the ear and started to drag her back to confront her mistress.

"There's still that other 'snow cave' where we haven't looked yet," said Ch'iu-chü.

"You mean the Hidden Spring Grotto?" said Ch'un-mei. "That's Father's hideaway. And besides, Mother hasn't been in there for some time now. I'll watch while you take a look, but if you don't come up with anything I'll have something further to say to you."

Thereupon, she escorted her into the whitewashed "snow cave" of the Hidden Spring Grotto. There was a couch facing the door with

an incense table beside it, but Ch'iu-chü found nothing there and began to rummage in Hsi-men Ch'ing's letter case.

"That letter case is where Father keeps his calling cards and stationery," said Ch'un-mei. "How would Mother's shoe get in there? You're just up to your tricks, playing for time. If you muss everything up that way and he ever finds out about it, there'll be another ruckus for sure. You splay-legged whore, you're just asking for it."

After some time, lo and behold, Ch'iu-chü exclaimed, "Isn't this Mother's shoe? It's wrapped up in a paper bag together with some sticks of incense and lysimachia."

She took it out and showed it to Ch'un-mei, saying, "How is it that I've come up with Mother's shoe after all? And just now you were inciting her to beat me."

Ch'un-mei looked at it and, sure enough, it was a scarlet flat-soled shoe.

"If it really is Mother's," she said, "how did it ever get into this letter case? It's very strange indeed."

Thereupon, they went back to see their mistress.

"So you have my shoe, do you?" the woman asked. "Where did it turn out to be?"

"It was in a letter case in Father's hideaway in the Hidden Spring Grotto," said Ch'un-mei, "that we found it. It was in with his calling cards and stationery, wrapped up together with some lysimachia and benzoin."

The woman took it in her hand and then picked up her other shoe to compare with it. They were both embroidered shoes of scarlet silk, figured with flowers from each of the four seasons and the symbolic representations of the "eight treasures," with flat, white satin soles, green heel lifts, and blue hook and eye fastenings. Only the chain stitching of the two shoes was slightly different. One was chain stitched with sand-green thread, and the other with turquoise-blue thread. Without careful scrutiny they could not have been told apart.

The woman tried them on her feet to test the fit and found that the newly discovered shoe was slightly tighter than the old one. Only then did she realize that it must have belonged to Lai-wang's wife, Sung Hui-lien.

"Who knows when," she thought to herself, "she must have given it to that lousy ruffian of ours. He didn't have the nerve to bring it into the house so he surreptitiously hid it there. How could he have anticipated that it would be turned up by this slave?"

After looking at it for a while, she said, "This is not my shoe. You slave, you'd better get out there right away and kneel down as you've been told."

Turning to Ch'un-mei, she said, "Find a stone and make her balance it on her head."

Ch'iu-chü started to cry, saying, "If it isn't Mother's shoe, whose shoe is it? Even though I found the shoe for you, you still intend to beat me. If I'd been unable to find it, who knows what a beating I would have had."

"Hold your tongue, you lousy slave!" the woman cursed at her.

Ch'un-mei accordingly lifted up a large stone and balanced it on top of Ch'iu-chü's head.

The woman then changed into another pair of shoes and, feeling that the room was too hot, told Ch'un-mei to take her dressing mirror up to the Flower-viewing Tower so she could do her hair there. After doing her hair she intended to give Ch'iu-chü a beating. But no more of this.

To resume our story, that morning Ch'en Ching-chi had come in from the pawnshop to look for some clothing. When he got to the postern gate leading into the flower garden he encountered Little Iron Rod, who was playing there.

Seeing that Ch'en Ching-chi was carrying a pair of silver hairnet rings in his hand, the youngster asked, "Uncle, what's that you've got there? Let me have them to play with."

"This is a pair of hairnet rings that somebody pawned," said Ch'en Ching-chi. "They've come to redeem them, and I'm taking them out to return to them."

“Uncle,” said the little monkey with an ingratiating smile, “Let me have them to play with. I’ll give you something nice in exchange.”

“A fine child you are!” said Ch’en Ching-chi. “These are things that somebody pawned. If you want, I’ll find another pair for you to play with. What sort of nice thing have you got? Let me see it.”

The monkey then reached inside his waistband, pulled out a scarlet embroidered shoe, and showed it to Ching-chi.

“Where’d it come from?” asked Ching-chi.

“Uncle,” the monkey said with an ingratiating smile, “I’ll tell you all about it. Yesterday I was playing in the garden and saw that Father had suspended the Fifth Lady’s two feet from the grape arbor overhead and they were having quite a stormy time of it. Later, after Father had gone inside, I pestered Auntie Ch’un-mei for some fruit to eat and picked up this shoe under the grape arbor.”

Ching-chi took it in his hand and saw that it was:

As curved as the new moon at heaven’s edge,
As red as the fallen petal of a lotus blossom.

When he cradled it in his palm, it was:

Barely three inches long,

and he knew that it must be an object that had graced Chin-lien’s foot.

“Give it to me,” he said, “and tomorrow I’ll find another pair of nice rings for you to play with.”

“No fooling, Uncle,” the monkey said. “Tomorrow I’ll come and demand them of you.”

“I’m not fooling you,” said Ching-chi.

At this the monkey laughed and went off to play.

Ch’en Ching-chi tucked the shoe into his sleeve and thought to himself, “I’ve flirted with her more than once, and she always sounds ready enough; but when it comes to the point, she’s proven elusive. Who would have thought that:

As providence would have it,

this shoe should have fallen into my hands. Today I'll give her cinders a real stirring. Never fear, she's bound to come around."

Truly:

There is no need for the people of today to
practice threading needles;
How could the Weaving Maid have the leisure
to confer such dexterity?[17]

Ch'en Ching-chi, with the shoe in his sleeve, headed straight for P'an Chin-lien's quarters. When he had made his way around the spirit screen, what should he see but Ch'iu-chü kneeling in the courtyard.

"Young lady," he joked, "what have you done this time? It looks as though you've joined the New Army and have to spend your time lifting stones."

Chin-lien overheard this sally from her vantage point on the second floor and called to Ch'un-mei, saying, "Who is it who says she's lifting stones? I wouldn't be surprised if the slave's taken the stone off her head."

"It's your son-in-law," said Ch'un-mei. "Ch'iu-chü has still got the stone on her head."

"If it's you, Son-in-law," the woman called out, "there's no one else up here. Why don't you come upstairs."

The young scamp:

Quickening his pace and hiking up his clothes,

raced up the stairs. What should he see but the woman, sitting on the second floor, with two windows open in front of her, over which bamboo blinds had been let down, gazing into her dressing mirror and doing her hair. Ch'en Ching-chi went right up beside her and sat down on a low stool.

He looked on as the woman combed lock after lock of her glossy black hair, which reached all the way to the floor. Then she bound it with a red silk ribbon and did it up in a "bag of silk" chignon, over which she placed a fret of silver filigree in such a way as to set off a coil of fragrant hair. She had placed a quantity of rose petals inside her fret, and two tufts of hair were allowed to escape at either

temple. In fact she was so made up as to look like an avatar of the Goddess Kuan-yin.

In a little while, as he watched the woman complete her toilet, she put away her dressing mirror, rinsed her hands in a washbasin, put on her outer clothes, and called to Ch'un-mei, saying, "Bring our son-in-law a cup of tea."

While this was going on, Ching-chi merely smiled, without saying a word.

"What are you smiling for?" the woman finally asked.

"I'm smiling," said Ching-chi, "because I know that you've lost something."

"You lousy short-life!" the woman said. "If I've lost anything, what's it to you? And what do you know about it, anyway?"

"You see," said Ching-chi:

> "Even my best intentions are treated like the
> entrails of an ass.

You'd rather mock me, would you? Well, if that's the way it is, I might as well go."

So saying, he got up and started down the stairs.

The woman grabbed hold of him with her hand, saying, "You crazy short-life! You can put on quite an act, can't you? Now that Lai-wang's wife is dead, you've no one to think about, and so you've contrived to remember your old mother."

"Go ahead and guess," she went on to say. "What is it that I've lost, do you think?"

Ching-chi pulled the shoe out of his sleeve and dangled it by its heel lift, saying with a laugh, "Look at this. Who does this goody belong to?"

"A fine short-life you are!" the woman said. "So it was you who made off with my shoe, causing me to beat my maidservant and search all over the place."

"Make a guess," said Ching-chi. "How do you suppose it came into my hands?"



Ch’en Ching-chi Teases Chin-lien about a Shoe

“Who else ever comes into my place?” the woman said. “You must have sneaked in here:

Like a furtive thieving rat,[18]

and made off with this shoe of mine.”

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself,” said Ching-chi. “Since when have I been in your place the last couple of days? How could I have stolen anything of yours?”

“A fine, lousy short-life you are!” the woman said. “Just wait till I tell Father about it. First you steal my shoe, and then tell me I ought to be ashamed of myself.”

“All you ever seem able to do,” said Ching-chi, “is try to use Father to scare me.

“You’ve got quite a nerve, don’t you?” the woman said. “You knew perfectly well that Father was:

Playing at sevens and eights,[19]

with Lai-wang’s wife, but you flirted with her anyway. As though that whore would share her favors with the likes of you! If it wasn’t you who stole my shoe, how did it fall into your hands? The sooner you confess the truth and return my shoe, the better for you. It has always been true that:

When an object meets its owner,
It is sure to be repossessed.[20]

If you dare utter so much as:

Half the word ‘no,’[21]

I’ll see to it that:

You’ll die without a plot to be buried in.”

“You’re just like a plainclothes officer:

You’ve got a real knack for knavery,”[22]

said Ching-chi. “There’s no one else here, so we can talk freely. If you want this shoe, you’ll have to give me something in exchange for it. Otherwise, you couldn’t beat it out of me with a steelyard.”

“A fine short-life you are!” the woman said. “It’s my shoe, and you ought to return it to me. What do you want in exchange for it, anyway?”

“Fifth Lady,” said Ching-chi with a laugh, “if you give your son that handkerchief in your sleeve, your son will return your shoe to you.”

“I’ll find you another nice handkerchief tomorrow,” the woman said. “Your father has seen this one often enough to recognize it, so it wouldn’t do to give it to you.”

“I don’t want another one,” said Ching-chi. “Even if you gave me a hundred, it wouldn’t make any difference. My heart is set on this particular handkerchief.”

“A fine short-life you are!” the woman said.

“You’re such a practiced old hand,
I don’t have the strength to contend with you any longer.”

Thereupon, she reached into her sleeve and pulled out a fine, tasseled, white satin handkerchief, decorated with a drawnwork motif of:

Ts’ui Ying-ying Burning Evening Incense,[23]

which also had a silver chatelaine with three pendant charms attached to it, and tossed it over to him. Ching-chi deftly caught it in his hands and made her a deep bow.

“You’d better keep it well hidden,” the woman instructed him. “Don’t let your wife see it. She’s got a nasty tongue in her head.”

“I understand,” Ching-chi said, handing her the shoe, and then proceeded, thus and so, to give a full account of how “Little Iron Rod picked it up in the garden yesterday and this morning offered to exchange it for a pair of hairnet rings for him to play with.”

When the woman heard this:

Her powdered face became suffused with red, as she
Silently gnashed her silvery teeth.

“Look at this,” she said. “That lousy little slave with his greasy hands has smudged my shoe till it’s as black as lacquer. Just see if I don’t get Father to give him a thrashing.”

“You’ll do me in yet,” protested Ching-chi. “I don’t care if he gets a beating as long as I’m not implicated. Whatever you do, don’t say that I told you about it.”

“As for sparing that little slave,” the woman said, “I’d sooner spare a scorpion.”

Just as they were in the midst of their conversation, they suddenly heard that the page boy, Lai-an, had come looking for Ch'en Ching-chi.

"Father's in the front reception hall," he reported, "and wants Uncle to go write some gift cards for him."

The woman hurriedly sent him on his way.

After coming downstairs, she told Ch'un-mei to fetch a bamboo cane so she could beat Ch'iu-chü.

Ch'iu-chü protested and refused to lie down, saying, "I found Mother's shoe, and now Mother still wants to beat me."

The woman showed her the shoe that Ch'en Ching-chi had just given her and cursed her, saying, "You lousy slave! You tried to pass off that other shoe as mine, but where did you put this one?"

When Ch'iu-chü saw it, she stared at it for some time but refused to acknowledge her mistake, saying, "What a strange business! How could Mother turn out to have three shoes?"

"You impudent slave!" the woman said. "First you try to palm somebody else's shoe off on me, and now you suggest that I'm a three-legged toad![24] How do you account for this shoe then?"

Without permitting any further explanation, she ordered Ch'un-mei to bend her over and proceeded to give her ten cuts with the cane.

Weeping and trying to protect her bottom with her hands, Ch'iu-chü turned to Ch'un-mei and said, "It was all your doing. When you opened the garden gate yesterday, you must have let someone in who picked up Mother's shoe. And now you're inciting Mother to beat me."

"It was you who brought in Mother's bedding and lost her shoe," Ch'un-mei cursed at her. "Mother has only given you these few strokes with the cane, and you have the nerve to try to blame someone else. It's a good thing it was only this old shoe. No doubt if it had been Mother's hairpin or earring that was lost, you'd be even more anxious to find a scapegoat. Mother has been lenient in letting you off so lightly. If it were up to me, I'd call in one of the page

boys from outside and get him to give you twenty or thirty sharp cuts with the cane and see how you liked that."

This tirade reduced Ch'iu-chü to silence. There was nothing she could do but:

Swallow her anger and keep her own counsel.

Hsi-men Ch'ing had summoned Ch'en Ching-chi to the front reception hall in order to take charge of sealing up a bolt of material and other gifts to be sent to Battalion Commander Ho Chin from the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, who had recently been promoted to the post of principal judicial officer in the Huai-an office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission. His friends and relatives from the local Guard Battalion were all going to give him a farewell party at the Yung-fu Ssu, or Temple of Eternal Felicity. But no more of this.

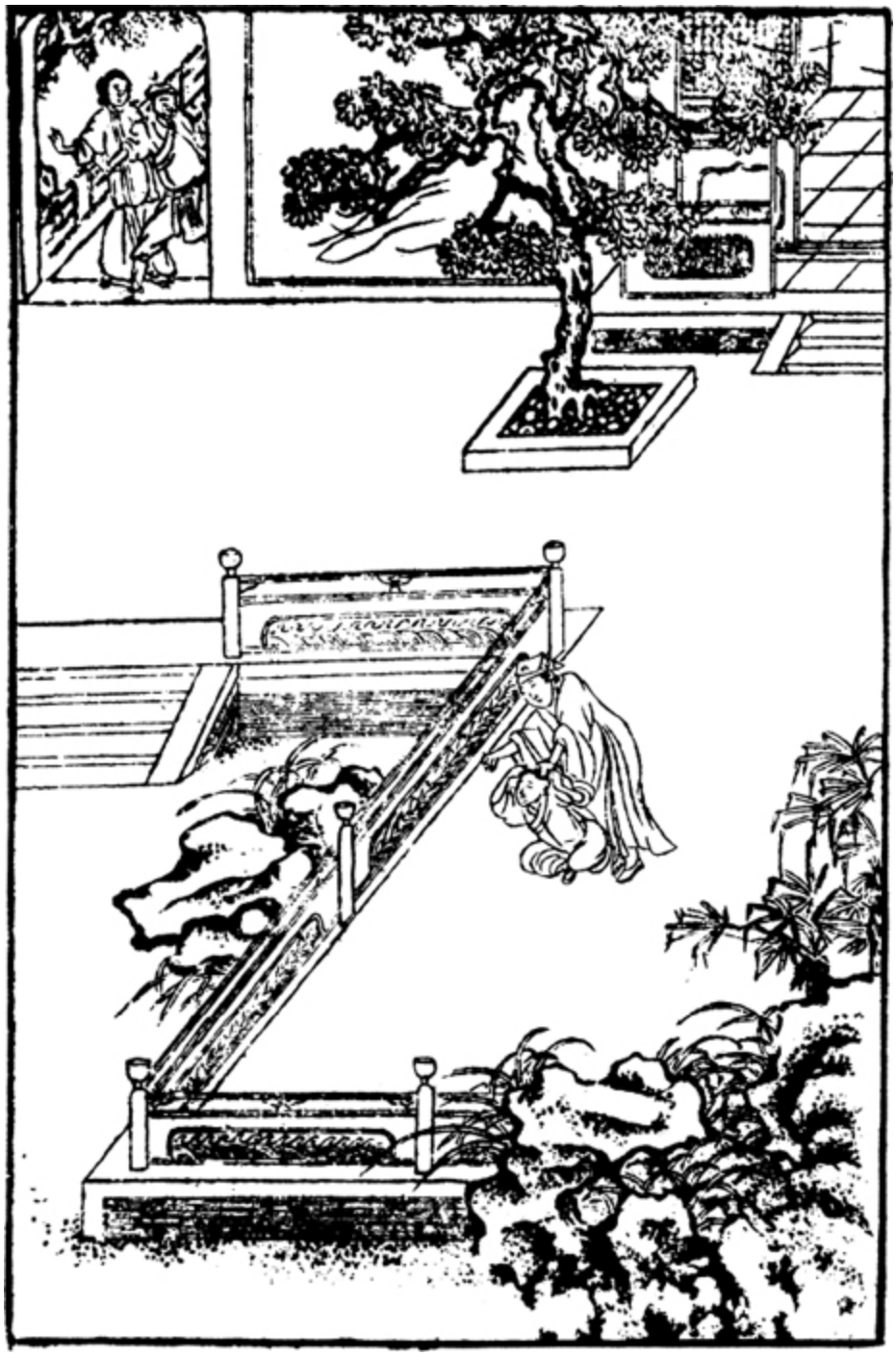
After Hsi-men Ch'ing had sent off Tai-an to deliver the gifts, he joined Ch'en Ching-chi in having something to eat in the reception hall and then went back to Chin-lien's quarters. Chin-lien, though she:

Never, ever, should have done it,

told him the whole story of how Little Iron Rod had picked up her shoe.

"You ill-bred good-for-nothing!" she railed at him. "It was your pointless shenanigans that led to that lousy death-defying little slave's being able to pick up my shoe in the first place. If he took it outside the compound, who knows who might have seen it. As soon as I found out about it, I managed to get it back from him. If you don't give him a couple of licks he'll soon be incorrigible."

Hsi-men Ch'ing didn't bother to ask how she had found out about it but made off in a fit of rage for the front of the compound. The little monkey, who was quite oblivious to the situation, was playing on the stone stylobate around the reception hall. Hsi-men Ch'ing grabbed hold of him by the tuft of hair on the crown of his head and assaulted him with both fists and feet. Not until he:



Hsi-men Ch’ing Angrily Beats Little Iron Rod

Howled like a stuck pig,
did he desist.

The little monkey was left lying unconscious on the ground and remained so for quite a while until Lai-chao and his wife showed up

in consternation and succeeded, after some time, in reviving him. They saw that the youngster's nose was bleeding and had to carry him back to their room. Only after prolonged interrogation did they ascertain that it was all because he had picked up Chin-lien's shoe and exchanged it for a pair of hairnet rings from Ch'en Ching-chi that the trouble had started.

Lai-chao's wife, "The Beanpole," fuming with rage, went back to the kitchen in the rear compound and:

Pointing to the east while cursing the west,[25]

gave vent to an indiscriminate tirade, saying, "You'll come to a bad end, you lousy whore and you cuckold's spawn! What have you got against my son? He's only twelve or thirteen years old. What does he know about anything? He doesn't even know where your cunt is located. But you go out of your way to incite your man into giving him a thrashing for no good reason, and beat him until his nose bleeds. Suppose you had killed him. It would have gone the worse for you, you whore and you cuckold. And what purpose of yours would that have served?"

Thereupon, having given vent to her tirade in the kitchen, she went up to the front of the compound and gave a repeat performance, continuing along the same lines for a whole day or two without stopping. Because Chin-lien was in her quarters drinking wine with Hsi-men Ch'ing, she still knew nothing about it.

That evening, when they went to bed for the night, Hsi-men Ch'ing noticed that the woman had on a pair of sand-green pongee sleeping shoes with scarlet heel lifts and said, "Ai-ya! What are you wearing those things on your feet for? They look weird and don't become you."

"I only have one pair of red sleeping shoes," the woman said, "and that little slave picked up one of them and soiled it for me. Where would I get a second pair?"

"My child," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "make a new pair tomorrow and wear them on your feet. You don't know how much your daddy prefers the sight of you in red shoes. It excites me just to see them."

“You crazy slave!” the woman said. “So that’s the way it is? But that reminds me of something I meant to bring up and then forgot.”

So saying, she ordered Ch’un-mei, “Bring that other shoe here and let him see it. Do you recognize whose shoe this is?”

“I don’t know whose shoe it is,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“Just look at him!” the woman exclaimed. “Still playing the innocent!

You may be a brown cat, but you’ve got a black tail.

Those are fine tricks you’ve been up to behind my back. You took this shoe off the stinking hoof of Lai-wang’s dead wife, treasured it like the pearl on a piece of jewelry, and secreted it in your “snow cave” in the Hidden Spring Grotto, under the artificial hill in the garden, carefully tucked away with the stationery in your card case, wrapped up together with sticks of incense. As though it were some exotic rarity! It’s really outrageous. No wonder that lousy whore went straight to the Avici Hell[26] when she died.”

Pointing to Ch’iu-chü, she continued her tirade, saying, “That slave turned it up, thinking it was my shoe, and I had to give her a beating.”

Then, turning to Ch’un-mei, she instructed her, “Throw it out of here, this minute.”

Ch’un-mei tossed the shoe onto the floor and said to Ch’iu-chü, “Here’s something you can wear if you want it.”

Ch’iu-chü took it up in her hand, saying, “This shoe of Mother’s is so small I’d be lucky if I could get a toe into it.”

“You lousy slave!” the woman cursed at her. “Whose cunt of a mother are you talking about? She must have been your master’s mother in an earlier incarnation. Otherwise, why should he treasure her shoe in such a way, as though it were a family heirloom to be passed on from generation to generation? The shameless good-for-nothing!”

Ch’iu-chü picked up the shoe and started out of the room, but the woman called her back, saying, “Fetch me a knife so I can chop that whore into pieces and throw them into the privy. I’ll fix it so that lousy whore ends up:

On the far side of the mountains of Hell;
Never again to be reborn in human form."[27]

Then she turned to Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "The more it hurts you to see this, the more thoroughly I'll cut it up, just to show you."

Hsi-men Ch'ing laughed, saying, "You crazy slave! Why don't you call it quits? What do I care about it?"

"If you don't care," said the woman, "swear an oath on it. As for that whore:

Nobody knows where the dead end up going to.[28]

So what are you still keeping her shoe around for? It must be that whenever you think of her, early or late, you want some memento to remind you of her. Meanwhile, for those of us who are properly married to you, you haven't a thought to spare. How can you expect anyone to be:

Of one heart and one mind,

with you under the circumstances?"

"That's enough, you crazy little whore!" laughed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "You're always up to your tricks. When she was alive she never failed to perform what duty demanded of her where you were concerned."

Thereupon, putting an arm around her powdered neck, he gave her a kiss, and the two of them proceeded to engage in the game of clouds and rain together. Truly:

The spring beauty arouses the beholder,
complaisantly alluring;
The fragrant corolla attracts the butterfly,
in redolent surrender.[29]

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Vainly expressing her fragrant heart, to whom
is she to speak;
Where can she hope to find a fit repository
for her longings?
Though her longings may come to an end,
her passion is unending;

Every day it returns to affect her during
all twenty-four hours.[30]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 29

IMMORTAL WU PHYSIOGNOMIZES THE EXALTED AND THE HUMBLE; P'AN CHIN-LIEN ENJOYS A MIDDAY BATTLE IN THE BATHTUB

One has but a hundred years of autumn moons
and spring flowers;
So one might as well relax one's frowning brows
rather than repine.
Recite a few verses in order to dissipate
the worries of the world;
Pour a couple of cups of wine to while away
the fullness of youth.
When idle, play at board games in order to
amuse oneself;
When depressed, pluck the inlaid zither to
elevate your mood.
Of human affairs and the events of the times
take no heed;
Just make poetry and wine the preoccupations
of your life.[1]

THE STORY GOES that the next morning P'an Chin-lien got up early and sent Hsi-men Ch'ing on his way. Remembering that she wanted to make a new pair of red shoes for herself, she took her sewing box into the garden with her and sat down on the stylobate of the Kingfisher Pavilion, where she began to sketch the design to

be embroidered on the vamps of her new shoes. She sent Ch'un-mei to invite Li P'ing-erh to join her.

When Li P'ing-erh arrived, she asked, "What's that you're sketching, Sister?"

"I want to make a pair of shoes," said Chin-lien, "out of scarlet iridescent silk, with flat white satin soles, the toes of which will be embroidered with the motif of 'A Parrot Plucking a Peach.' "

"I've got a square of scarlet variegated silk," said Li P'ing-erh. "I'll make a pair just like your's, except that I want high heels on mine."

Thereupon, she fetched her sewing box and the two of them sat down to work together.

When Chin-lien had finished sketching the pattern on one vamp, she set it aside, saying, "Sister Li, sketch the other one for me, will you? I'm going to the rear compound to fetch Sister Meng the Third. She told me yesterday that she was going to make a pair of shoes too."

She went straight to the rear compound. Meng Yü-lou was in her room, leaning on the bedrail, stitching away at a shoe that she held in her hand.

When Chin-lien came in the door, Yü-lou said, "You're up and about early today."

"I got up early," said Chin-lien, "and sent Father off to attend the farewell party for Battalion Commander Ho Chin outside the South Gate. I've arranged with Sister Li to do some needlework together in the garden while it's still cool in the morning. In a little while the sun will be too hot and we won't be able to continue. I've just finished sketching the design for one shoe and asked Sister Li to do the other one for me while I came straight over here to invite you to join us. The three of us can do our work together."

"What kind of shoe is that you're working on right now?" she went on to ask.

"It's that pair of jet silk shoes you saw me start on yesterday," Yü-lou replied.

"What a fine fellow you are," exclaimed Chin-lien. "You've managed to finish one of them already."

“I stitched that one yesterday,” said Yü-lou, “and I’ve already done a good deal on this one.”

Chin-lien asked to have a look at it and said, “What kind of decoration are you going to put on the toe?”

“I’m not to be compared with you youngsters,” said Yü-lou, “with your flashy fashions. I’m too old for that. I’ll have gold-spangled toes, with a motif of white mountains around them, stitched out with sand-green thread, white satin soles, and high heels. How does that sound?”

“All right,” said Chin-lien. “Get your stuff together now. Let’s go. Li P’ing-erh is waiting for us.”

“Sit down,” said Yü-lou, “and have some tea before we go.”

“Let’s not drink it here,” said Chin-lien, “but take it with us and drink it there.”

Yü-lou instructed Lan-hsiang to make the tea and deliver it to them in the garden. The two women then tucked the shoe vamps into their sleeves and set out for the front compound, holding hands as they went.

Wu Yüeh-niang was sitting in the veranda outside the master suite and asked, “Where are you going?”

“Sister Li sent me to fetch Meng the Third for her,” said Chin-lien, “to help her sketch the design for a pair of shoes.”

So saying, they went straight out to the garden where the three of them sat down together, pulled out their vamps, looked over each other’s handiwork, and proceeded to compare notes. Before this, Ch’un-mei had already served them with tea; later on, tea was provided from Li P’ing-erh’s quarters; and, finally, Lan-hsiang arrived with more tea from Meng Yü-lou’s place, and the three of them drank it together.

“Sister Six,” said Yü-lou, “what are you making flat-soled red shoes for? They don’t look as nice as high-heeled shoes. If you’re worried that wooden heels are too noisy, you can put felt on them, as I do, and they won’t make a noise when you walk.”

“They aren’t for everyday wear,” said Chin-lien. “They’re sleeping shoes. It’s all because I couldn’t find one of my sleeping shoes,

which turned out to have been stolen by that little slave, who soiled it into the bargain, that Father told me to make a new pair of shoes."

"Speaking of shoes," said Yü-lou, "and:

This is not just talebearing,[2]

mind you, Sister Li is here to bear me witness; yesterday, all on account of this missing shoe of yours, which got picked up in the garden somehow or other by Lai-chao's son, Little Iron Rod, and which you mentioned to Father when you found out about it, he gave Little Iron Rod a thrashing. They say Father beat the monkey until his nose bled and left him lying on the ground unconscious for quite a while. This upset The Beanpole' so much that she indulged in an indiscriminate tirade in the rear compound, saying, That whore and that cuckold's spawn incited him into beating my son. That son of mine, who's still such a child he scarcely knows how to piss, what does he know about anything, that she should egg her man into giving him such a beating? It's a good thing he's still alive. If he'd been dead, that whore and that cuckold's spawn would never get away with it.' I didn't know at the time whom she was cursing as a whore and a cuckold's spawn. It was only later on, when Little Iron Rod came into the rear compound and Elder Sister asked him, 'Why did Father beat you?,' that the youngster said, 'While playing in the garden I picked up a shoe and asked Uncle if I could exchange it for a pair of hairnet rings. I don't know who it was who told Father about it and got him to give me a beating. I'm looking for Uncle right now so I can ask him for those rings.' Having said which, he ran right out front again. So it turned out to be Ch'en Ching-chi that she was cursing as a cuckold's spawn. Luckily, the only person sitting there at the time was Li Chiao-erh. Hsi-men Ta-chieh didn't happen to be there. If she had heard it all, there would have been another ruckus, for sure."

"Did Elder Sister have anything to say about it?" asked Chin-lien.

"You might well ask," said Yü-lou. "Elder Sister had quite a lot to say about you. She said, 'Right now in this household:

Chaos is king.

The nine-tailed fox fairy has appeared in the world,
and has got that benighted ruler so befuddled he'll be:
Banishing his son and divorcing his wife,
before you know it. Just remember what she did to that servant, Lai-wang, who's no longer with us. He'd only just gotten back, as nice as you please, from a trip to the south, when she started telling:
First a tale to the east,
And then one to the west,
about how his wife was carrying on with his master, how he was playing the thief all day long:
Brandishing knives and flourishing weapons,[3]
while she was busy committing adultery. She managed to frame him so effectively he was driven out of the household, whereupon she turned her attention to his wife and made her life so unbearable she committed suicide. And now, all on account of a single shoe, she's stirred up enough of a rumpus to:
Startle Heaven and shake the earth.
If it was your shoe, why didn't you keep it on your foot where it belonged? How did it get anywhere where that youngster could pick it up, in the first place? I'll bet it was only because she got drunk out in the garden and was up to something with that man of ours, contriving to be:
As stuck on one another as sugar candy,
that she lost track of her shoe. And now, unable to cover her own embarrassment, she's made a scapegoat of that youngster and he's ended up getting a drubbing. And it's not even over anything important!' "

When Chin-lien heard this, she exclaimed, "She should stop talking through her cunt! If murder isn't something important, what is? That slave was out to kill his master with knife in hand!"

Then, turning to Yü-lou, she continued, "Luckily, Sister Three, you're not to be deceived about that. The two of us both heard what Lai-hsing had to say and were scared as could be. And as for you, Elder Sister, you're his primary wife, and yet you dismiss it like that.

‘If you won’t do anything about it,
I won’t do anything about it.’

She wouldn’t have seen fit to do anything about it until that slave had murdered our husband. Meanwhile, the slave’s wife was on duty in that rear compound of yours all day long, and you let her do as she pleased, without taking her to task; allowing her to:

Deceive her superiors and oppress her inferiors,[4]

picking fights with first this one and then that one. After all:

For every injustice there is a perpetrator;
For every debt there is a creditor.
If you can make accusations against me,
I can make accusations against you.

And when she hanged herself, you still didn’t tell our husband the whole story. Luckily for you, by spending money and pulling strings the affair was successfully hushed up. Otherwise there never would have been an end to it. And you pretend to be so pure and:

Put such a good face on things.

After all:

What’s so is so.[5]

If I put our husband up to it, so be it. As for that pair of slaves, husband and wife, if I hadn’t been able to get them:

Driven away from this door for good,

with the aid of a stick, what good would I be? No matter what happens:

No one is going to force me down a well.”

When Yü-lou saw how angry Chin-lien had become, as:

Her powdered face became suffused with red,

she admonished her, saying, “Sister Six, you and I are sisters. It’s just as though we were the same person. When I hear something, how could I fail to tell you about it? But now that I’ve told you, you must keep it to yourself. Don’t let it get about.”

Chin-lien did not do as she was bid. That evening she waited until Hsi-men Ch’ing came into her room and then gave him a word for word account of what she had heard.

“Lai-chao’s wife, ‘The Beanpole,’ has been cursing at us in the rear compound,” she reported, “saying that you gave her child a beating, and threatening to make trouble for us.”

Nothing might have happened if Hsi-men Ch’ing had not heard this, but having heard it, he made a point of remembering it.

The next day he was going to expel Lai-chao and his family, all three of them, from the household. It was only owing to the repeated remonstrances of Yüeh-niang that he relented. But he would not permit them to reside any longer in the compound and packed them off to look after the house on Lion Street, relieving P’ing-an, who returned home to take charge of the main gate. Afterwards, when Yüeh-niang found out who was responsible, she was very angry with Chin-lien. But enough of this. Truly:

If you don’t think thrice before doing something,
you will later regret it;[6]
When people have occasion for self-satisfaction,
it is time to repent.[7]

To resume our story, Hsi-men Ch’ing went to the front reception hall and presided over the departure of Lai-chao and his family, all three of them, to look after the house on Lion Street.

One day he happened to be sitting in the front reception hall when P’ing-an, who was now in charge of the front gate, came in and reported, saying, “His Honor Chou Hsiu of the commandant’s headquarters has sent around a physiognomist, called Immortal Wu, who is waiting at the gate to see you.”

“Send in the man who brought him,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing; and after the latter person had presented the commandant’s card, he said, “Invite him to come in.”

Before long, Immortal Wu floated ethereally in from the outside.

On his head he affected a black cotton Taoist cap,
On his body he wore a cotton robe and black sandals,
At his waist hung a yellow silk sash with two tassels,
In his hand he held a tortoiseshell-patterned fan.[8]

He appeared to be something over forty years of age.

His spirit was as pure as the hoary moon
over the Yangtze River;
His visage was as ancient as a tall pine
on the summit of Mount Hua.[9]
His demeanor was awe-inspiring,
His Taoist aura was imposing.[10]

It so happens that immortals are possessed of four unusual attributes:

Their bodies are like pines,
Their voices are like bells,
Their repose is like a bow,
Their movement like the wind.[11]

Behold:

Master of the discriminating mirror of physiognomy,
Adept at interpreting the rules of Hsü Tzu-p'ing;[12]
By examining celestial phenomena he understands
the yin and yang,
By perusing the *Dragon Canon* he can assess
geomantic conditions.[13]
Profoundly conversant with the Five Planetary Features,[14]
Deliberating to himself upon the Three Fates;[15]
By scrutinizing the astrological circumstances,
He can determine the success or failure of a lifetime;
By observing the humor and the complexion,
He can decide the good or evil of one's allotted years.
If he is not Ch'en T'uan, the realized adept who
sojourned on Mount Hua,[16]
He must be Yen Chün-p'ing, who sold fortunes
in the market of Ch'eng-tu.[17]

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw Immortal Wu come in, he hastened down the steps to welcome him and escorted him into the reception hall. On meeting Hsi-men Ch'ing, Immortal Wu performed a low bow, saluted him in the Taoist manner by touching one hand to his forehead, and sat down.

A little later, after tea had been served, Hsi-men Ch'ing addressed his guest, saying, "I venture to inquire of Your Reverence:

What are your lofty name and elegant style,
What immortal realm do you hail from,[18]

and how do you come to be acquainted with His Excellency Chou Hsiu?"

Immortal Wu inclined his body slightly where he sat and replied, "My surname is Wu, my given name is Shih,[19] and my Taoist appellation is Shou-chen. I am a native of Hsien-yu district in Chekiang province. In my youth I took instruction from a master and was ordained as a priest in the Purple Void Temple of Mount T'ien-t'ai. In the course of my peregrinations in the capital region I decided to seek the Way at Mount T'ai, which brought me into your distinguished vicinity. Commandant Chou asked me to treat his wife, who is suffering from an eye ailment, and has made a point of sending me to your honorable abode to proffer my services as a physiognomist."

"What schools of yin-yang do you practice, Reverend Sir," asked Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and what varieties of physiognomy do you profess?"

"I am roughly familiar with all thirteen schools[20] of Hsü Tzu-p'ing's method," replied Immortal Wu. "I am thoroughly conversant with the *Ma-i hsiang-fa* (The physiognomic technique of the Hemp-robed Master),[21] and equally so with the divine oracles generated by the six recurrences of the *jen* stem in the sexagenary cycle.[22] I constantly distribute medicine in order to cure people. Having no love of mundane wealth, I conform to the times and take the world as I find it."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard these words, he respected him all the more and praised him by saying, "Truly, you live up to the definition of an immortal."

Then he ordered his attendants to set out a table and provide vegetarian fare for Immortal Wu's entertainment.

"Commandant Chou sent me over here," said Immortal Wu, "and before I have had a chance to examine your physiognomy or read

your horoscope, you offer me a vegetarian repast."

"You have come from a distance, Your Reverence," said Hsi-men Ch'ing with a smile, "and must not have had breakfast. It won't be too late for you to tell my fortune after having something to eat."

Thereupon, he joined Immortal Wu in a vegetarian repast. After the plates had been removed, the table was wiped clean, and a brush and inkstone were procured.

"May I begin by having a look at your horoscope?" said Immortal Wu. "After that I will physiognomize your respected countenance."

Hsi-men Ch'ing then told him the eight characters determined by the celestial stems and terrestrial branches for the year, month, day, and hour of his birth, saying, "I was born in the year of the tiger and am twenty-eight years old. My birth took place in the seventh month, on the twenty-eighth day, during the *tzu* hour that falls around midnight.

Immortal Wu silently:

> Calculated on the joints of his fingers,[23]

and, after some time, said, "Your horoscope, sir, indicates that you were born in a *ping-yin* year, during a *hsin-yu* month, on a *jen-wu* day, during the *ping-tzu* time period.[24] In that year the solar term 'White Dew' fell on the twenty-third day of the seventh month, so your horoscope begins in the eighth month of the year.

"For a person with this horoscope, the combination *hsin-yu* that designates the month of your birth corresponds to the horoscopic category 'injurer of the official.' Tzu-p'ing says of this situation:

> When the 'injurer of the official' has done its injury
> it serves to augment 'wealth';
> When 'wealth' is 'flourishing' it begets 'the official'
> bringing prosperity in its wake.[25]

Your 'mansion of fate' corresponds to the branch *shen*. The symbol of your 'containing note' is 'earth on the city wall.'[26] The first of your 'decennial periods of fate'[27] began in your seventh year and was designated by the stem-branch combination *hsin-yu*, the second began in your seventeenth year and was designated by the combination *jen-hsü*, the third began in your twenty-seventh year

and was designated by the combination *kuei-hai*, the fourth will begin in your thirty-seventh year and be designated by the combination *chia-tzu*, and the fifth will begin in your forty-seventh year and be designated by the combination *i-ch'ou*.

"As I interpret your horoscope, it indicates that:

You are destined to be distinguished and flourishing,
Your eight characters are splendid and remarkable,
If you do not achieve distinction you will gain glory.

However, your 'one-sided official'[28] is the element earth associated with the stem *wu*, and you were born in the seventh or eighth month, which means that your horoscopic 'body' is too 'flourishing.' Fortunately the stem *jen*[29] in the combination *jen-wu* that designates the day of your birth is associated with the element water and also consorts with the stem *kuei*, which is likewise associated with water.

When water and fire complement each other,[30]
Thereby a mighty instrument may be forged.[31]

"You were born during the *ping-tzu* time period. When the stems *ping* and *hsin* occur in the same horoscope,[32] it indicates that in the future you are sure to:

Hold a position of authority,
Enjoy lifelong prosperity,
Be both happy and secure,
Strike it rich, be promoted,
And beget a distinguished son.[33]

You will be characterized by:

Upstanding firmness throughout your life, and
Single-mindedness in the conduct of your affairs.

When happy, you will exhibit:

The genial atmosphere of the spring breeze.[34]

When aroused to anger, you will become like:

A clap of thunder or a raging conflagration.

In the course of your life you will gain much wealth through marriage alliances and will not fail to wear the silk hat of an official.

On your deathbed there will be two sons to accompany you to your grave.[35]

"This year of your horoscope is a *ting-wei*[36] year. The stems *ting* and *jen* are 'harmonious,'[37] but at present the element fire associated with the stem *ting* is in its 'destructive' phase. But this is compensated for by the fact that:

What 'destroys' the 'self is its 'official'
or 'devil,'[38]

which in your case is the element earth that 'destroys' fire. This must portend the joy of:

An ascent to the clouds from the level ground,

and the glory of:

Appointment to office and augmented emolument.

Your present 'decennial period of fate' is designated by the stem-branch combination *kuei-hai.* The element earth associated with the stem *wu*, which is your 'one-sided official,' will be moistened by the element water associated with the stem *kuei*, which is sure to stimulate growth. In the near future you can be expected to benefit from the auspicious star and the horoscopic conjunction known as:

The Red Phoenix and Celestial Joy,[39] and
The portent of the 'black bears and brown,'[40]

indicating the birth of a son. Moreover, since both your 'mansion of fate' and your 'post-horse'[41] correspond to the branch *shen*, this event will occur before the end of the seventh month."

In the end what is my 'fatal limit' to be?" asked Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Will I suffer any calamities or not?"

"Sir," said Immortal Wu, "don't take offense at what I say, but it is unpropitious to have an excess of the *yin* element water in one's horoscope. Later, during the 'decennial period of your fate' designated by the combination *chia-tzu*, you may maintain your ascendancy over women, who represent the *yin* element, but will find yourself inconvenienced by the 'star of effluence,' and the adverse influence of the combination *jen-wu* that designates the day of your birth. The indications are that before your thirty-sixth year you will suffer from:

The calamity of spitting blood, and discharging pus, and
The affliction of desiccated bones and emaciated frame.”

“What about my situation at the present time?” asked Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“In this year of your horoscope,” said Immortal Wu, “the only problem is that the combination *jen-wu* that designates the day of your birth is adversely affected. The ‘five devils’ will make mischief in your household and may cause you some grief, but not enough to constitute a calamity. All these troubles will be dissipated by the visitation of the gods of felicity.”

“Are there any further setbacks in my fortune?” asked Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“Years follow in the wake of months,
Months follow in the wake of days,”

replied Immortal Wu. “It’s really hard to say.”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing heard this he was utterly delighted.

“Sir,” he then went on to say, “how would it be if you were to physiognomize me?”

“Turn your respected countenance so that it faces straight ahead,” said Immortal Wu, “and I will take a look at it.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing adjusted his seat accordingly.

“It is a dictum in the art of physiognomy,” said Immortal Wu, “that:

Where mind exists without likeness,
Likeness will appear in accord with mind;
Where likeness exists without mind,
Likeness will disappear in accord with mind.[42]

When I look you over, sir, the following principles apply:

One whose head is round and whose neck is short,
Is sure to be a person who enjoys good fortune.
One whose body is sturdy and whose muscles are strong,
Is certain to be an individual of heroic cast.
One whose forehead is high and prominent,[43]
Will not lack clothing or emolument in his lifetime.[44]

One whose chin is square-cut and full,
Will certainly acquire glory and honor in old age.[45]

These are all among your good points, but there are also a few deficiencies, which I hesitate to mention."

"Immortal sir," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "pray express yourself without constraint."

"Be so good, sir," said Immortal Wu, "as to take a couple of steps for my benefit."

Hsi-men Ch'ing took a few steps, as requested.

Immortal Wu said, "It is true of you that:

If one's gait is like a wind-tossed willow,[46]
He is certainly fated to lose a wife.
If one's canthi are marked by many lines,
He is destined to suffer enervation.[47]
If one's eyes do not weep, and yet
they fill with tears,
If one's mind is untroubled, and yet
his eyebrows are knit,[48]
If he fails to suffer grievous losses,
He will surely sacrifice his own life.

Only after you have gained the ascendancy over your 'wifely mansion' will you be all right."

"I already have," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Be so good as to let me have a look at your hand," said Immortal Wu.

Hsi-men Ch'ing extended his hand so that he could examine it.

Immortal Wu said:

"Wisdom and intelligence are manifest in skin and hair,
Sorrow and joy can be observed in hands and feet.[49]
If one's hands are fine, soft, plump, and smooth,
He is sure to enjoy good fortune, ease, and emolument.[50]
If one's two eyes are of different dimensions,
He is destined to be wealthy but untrustworthy.[51]
If one's eyebrows project at both ends,
He will always be self-satisfied and happy.[52]

If the bridge of one's nose is crossed by three lines,
His substance will surely be wasted or squandered.[53]
If the skin adjacent to one's canthi is red or purple,
He will gain much wealth through marriage alliances.
If a yellow aura emanates from one's upper brow,
He is sure to become an official within ten days.[54]
If a red color appears beneath one's left eye,
This year he is sure to beget a distinguished son.[55]

But there is yet another item, which I hesitate to mention.

If the flesh under one's eyelids is full and thick,
It is a sure indication of a lustful disposition.[56]
If the pubic hair around one's anus grows rank,
He will merit a reputation for lasciviousness.[57]

But fortunately for you:

The nose, as the indicator of one's wealth,
Governs the fortune of one's middle years.[58]
The hollow under the lower lip, and the chin,
Control the success or failure of one's old age.[59]

The hollow under the lower lip, and the chin,
should be full and prominent;
The tip of the nose is the indicator of one's wealth
and occupies the middle place.
The vicissitudes of a lifetime
are all determined by fate;
The mysterious dictates of physiognomy
brook no exceptions."

When Immortal Wu had finished his analysis, Hsi-men Ch'ing said, "Would you be so kind, immortal sir, as to physiognomize my wife and concubines?"

Having said which, he directed a page boy, "Go to the rear compound and ask the First Lady to come out."

Thereupon Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, Li P'ing-erh, Sun Hsüeh-o, and company all followed the First Lady out to

the front reception hall and eavesdropped on the proceedings from behind a hanging screen.

When Immortal Wu saw Yüeh-niang come out, he saluted her in the Taoist manner by touching one hand to his forehead. Not presuming to sit down in her presence, he stood to one side in order to observe her.

“Be so kind, my lady, as to turn your respected countenance so that it faces straight ahead,” he said.

Wu Yüeh-niang redirected her gaze until she was looking right outside the reception hall.

After Immortal Wu had scrutinized her for a while, he said, “As for you, my lady:

If one’s face is like the full moon,
Her household fortunes will prosper.
If one’s lips are like red lotus blossoms,
Her supply of clothing and food will be ample.[60]
If the features of one’s face are evenly placed,
She is sure to gain distinction and bear a son.[61]
If the sound of one’s voice is ethereal and clear,
She is sure to benefit her husband and gain wealth.[62]

Be so good as to let me see your hand.”

Yüeh-niang extended it from the mouth of her sleeve, exposing her ten slender fingers.

Immortal Wu said:

“If her hands are like dried ginger,
A woman will be good at housekeeping.[63]
If the hair at her temples is glossy,
A female will have an aura of elegance.

These are all among your good points, but there are also a few deficiencies. Please don’t take offense if I speak frankly.”

“Immortal sir,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “pray express yourself without constraint.”

Immortal Wu said:

“If one has black moles on the flesh under her eyelids,

She will suffer from lasting ills or do in her husband.
If one has wrinkled lines underneath her eyelids,
She will be incompatible with her six relations.[64]

If a woman's deportment is sedate and proper,
and she has an attractive appearance,
And if she walks as inconspicuously
as a turtle emerging from the water,
If her movements do not disturb the dust,[65]
and her words observe due measure,
And if her shoulders are barely perceptible,
she will marry a man of distinction."[66]

When he had finished physiognomizing her, Yüeh-niang retired.

"There are also my concubines," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "if you would be so kind as to take a look at them."

Thereupon Li Chiao-erh stepped up.

After Immortal Wu had scrutinized her for some time, he said, "As for this lady:

If her forehead is pointed and her nose small,[67]
She will be a concubine or marry three husbands.
If her flesh is heavy and her body plump,[68]
She will have ample food and clothing and live in luxury.
If her shoulders project and her voice is whiny,
She will either be menial or forsaken.
If the bridge of her nose should be too low,
She will either be poor or short-lived.[69]

Be so good as to take a few steps for my benefit."

When Li Chiao-erh had taken a few steps, Immortal Wu said:

"If her forehead is pointed, her posterior sticks out,
and she moves like a snake,
In her early years she is sure to have fallen into
the world of wind and dust.[70]
If it turns out that she does not become
the denizen of a brothel,

She is sure to be a concubine whose place it is
to stand behind the screen.[71]

When he had finished physiognomizing her, Li Chiao-erh withdrew.

"Third Sister Meng," Wu Yüeh-niang called out, "come over here and let him take a look at you."

After having scrutinized her, Immortal Wu said, "As for this lady:

One whose 'three sections' are of equal dimensions,
Will not lack clothing or emolument in her lifetime.[72]
One whose 'six treasuries' are full and prominent,[73]
Will certainly acquire glory and honor in old age.[74]
She will suffer few ills in her lifetime,
All because her 'lunar comet' shines bright.
She will reach old age without mishap,
Since her 'palace of longevity' is sleek.[75]

Be so good, young lady, as to take a couple of steps for my benefit."

When Meng Yü-lou had taken a few steps, Immortal Wu said:

"If her mouth is as square as the character 'four,'
and her spirit is clear,
She will be genial and generous, fit to be compared to
a pearl on the palm.[76]
She will both command respect and know how to please,
being destined to wealth,
And will gain the ascendancy over her husbands,[77]
two or more of them,"

When he had finished physiognomizing Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien was called for, but she merely giggled and refused to come out. Only after Yüeh-niang had urged her repeatedly did Chin-lien consent to present herself for inspection.

Immortal Wu raised his head to scrutinize the woman and then pondered to himself for some time before saying, "As for this lady:

If the hair by one's temples is thick and luxuriant,
She will cast sidelong glances and revel in wantonness.[78]

If one's face is pleasing and one's eyebrows are arched,
Her body will quiver spontaneously without any impetus.
If there are black birthmarks on one's countenance,
She is sure to gain the ascendancy over her husband.
If one's philtrum is short and abrupt,[79]
She is sure to suffer a premature death.[80]

If her movements are light and frivolous,[81]
she will be given to wantonness,
If her eyes are like dots of lacquer,[82]
she will destroy human relationships.
Under the moon, beneath the stars,
if she is never satisfied,
Though she should dwell in spacious structures,
she will find little peace."[83]

When Immortal Wu had finished physiognomizing Chin-lien, Hsi-men Ch'ing called for Li P'ing-erh to come out and let him examine her.

After having scrutinized her, Immortal Wu said, "As for this woman:

One whose skin is fragrant and smooth,
Will be the daughter of a well-to-do family.
One whose countenance is upright and correct,[84]
Will be the virtuous matron of a prominent house.[85]

The only problem is that:

If the glint in the eye suggests intoxication,
Assignations amid the mulberries are indicated.
If captivating dimples languidly appear,
Trysts beneath the moon are hard to rule out.[86]
If the fold under one's eyelid is glossy and purple,
She is sure to give birth to a distinguished son.[87]
If one's body is white and one's shoulders are rounded,
She is sure to enjoy the favor of her husband.
She will constantly suffer from illness and distress,
If the root of her nose is dingy and sunken.[88]

She will frequently encounter auspicious omens,
If the flesh over her eyebrows is clear and glossy.[89]

These are all among your good points, but there are also a few deficiencies, which you should be on your guard against.

If the root of one's nose is blue or black,
She will weep before or after her twenty-seventh year.
If the lines by one's nostrils are taut or contorted,
How can she survive the years of the cock or the dog?[90]
Beware! Beware![91]

With a flowerlike or moonlike countenance,[92]
she is sparing of her pinions;
Throughout her lifetime her best friends are
the male and the female phoenix.
The wealth and emoluments of a noble household
are hers to depend on;
Do not make the mistake of regarding her as
merely an ordinary bird,"[93]

When he had finished physiognomizing her, Li P'ing-erh withdrew. Yüeh-niang then ordered Sun Hsüeh-o to come out and let herself be inspected.

After having scrutinized her, Immortal Wu said, "As for this lady:

If one's body is short and one's voice high,
If her forehead is pointed and her nose small,

though she may have:

Left the dark valley and mounted on high,[94]

nevertheless, throughout her lifetime:

She will laugh sardonically without feeling, and
Her conduct will be devious and mean-spirited.[95]

But she is also destined to suffer from the four deformities, which eventually:

Are sure to indicate a violent death.[96]
The four deformities are as follows:
The lips are deformed in having no projection,

The ears are deformed in having no auricles,[97]
The eyes are deformed in having no spirit, and
The nose is deformed in not being straight.[98]

If one has a swallow's body and a wasp's waist,
she will be but a menial,
If one's eyes wander like flowing water,
without integrity or truth,[99]
If one stands leaning idly against the doorjamb[100]
as a general practice,
If neither maid nor concubine, she will fall into
the world of wind and dust."[101]

When Sun Hsüeh-o had withdrawn, Yüeh-niang told Hsi-men Ta-chieh to come and be inspected.

Immortal Wu said, "As for this woman:

If the bridge of one's nose is too sharp,
Her patrimony and her family will be destroyed.[102]
If one's voice is like a broken gong,[103]
The substance of her house will be squandered.
If the skin on one's face is too tight,
Though her philtrum be long, her life will be short.[104]
If her gait is like the hopping of a sparrow,
She will dwell at home, but lack food and clothing.
Before completing her twenty-seventh year,
She should suffer a calamity.

If adverse bickering with her husband should be
her most potent propensity,
The food and clothing inherited from her parents
will barely sustain her.
If her appearance and her bearing evince inhibition,
success will elude her,
She will either fall victim to an untoward death
or the direst adversity.[105]

When he had finished physiognomizing Hsi-men Ta-chieh, Ch'un-mei was also called out to undergo inspection. Immortal Wu opened his eyes wide and saw that Ch'un-mei was not more than seventeen years of age.

Wearing an informal cloud-shaped chignon enclosed in a fret of silver filigree, a white drawnwork blouse, a peach red skirt, and a blue silk vest, replete with:

Compressed hands and bound feet,[106]

she came out and bowed to him, saying, "Many felicitations."

After Immortal Wu had scrutinized her for some time, he said, "As for this young lady:

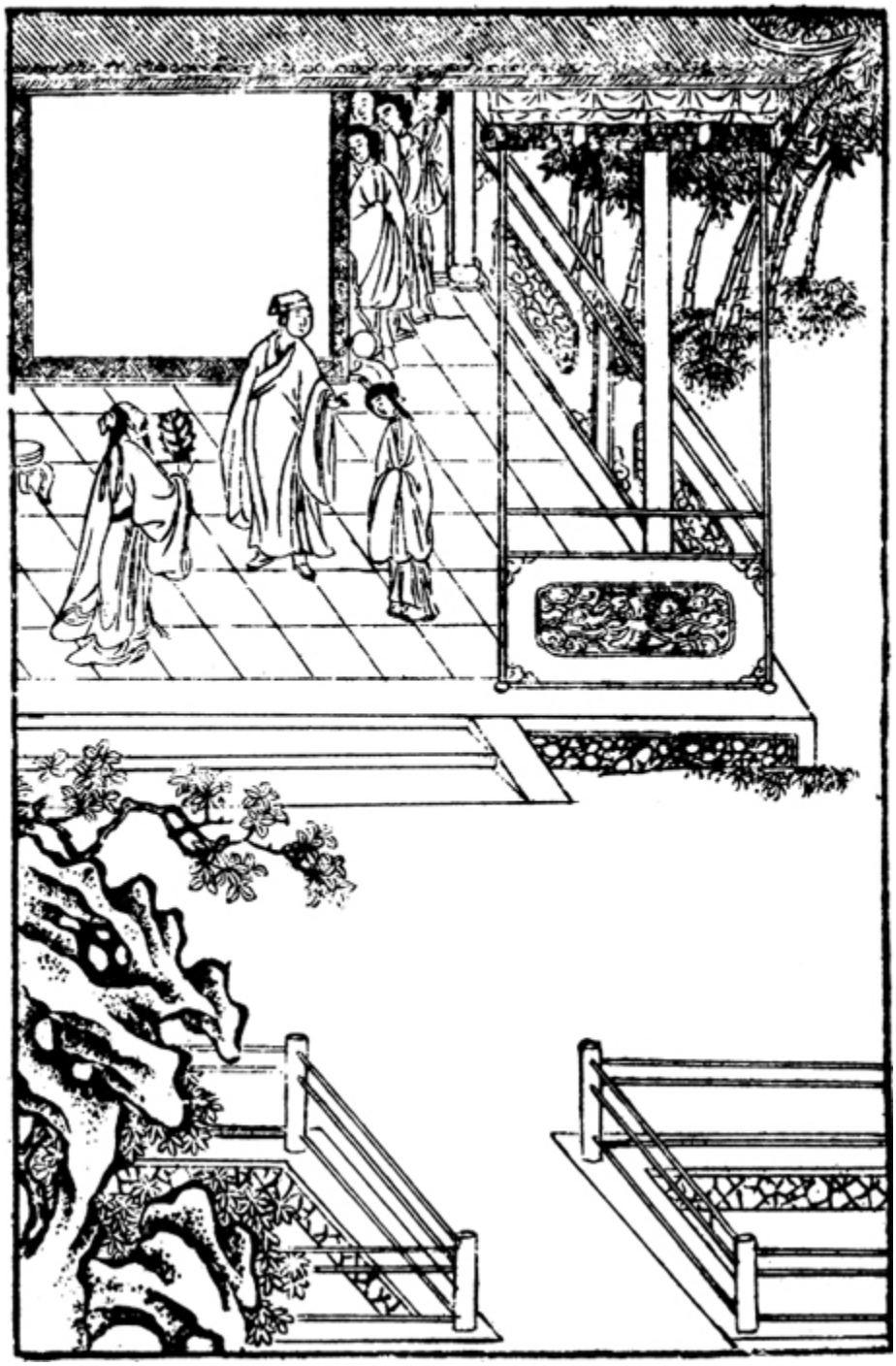
Her 'five governing features' are sedate and proper;[107]
Her skeletal structure is splendid and remarkable.[108]
If one's hair is fine and one's eyebrows thick,
Her nature will be demanding and strong.
If one's spirit is quick and one's eyes round,
Her character will be hot and bothered.[109]
If the root of one's nose is not discontinuous,
She is sure to have a distinguished husband
and give birth to a son.[110]
If one's two brows pay court to each other,
It indicates that at an early age she will
wear a pearl-decked cap.
If one's gait resembles an immortal in flight,
And the sound of one's voice is ethereal and clear,
She is sure to benefit her husband and gain wealth,
Obtaining a title of nobility at twenty-six.

But she is disadvantaged because:

If the left eye is large,
She will lose her father at an early age.
If the right eye is small,
She will lose her mother within the year.[111]
If one has a mole beneath the left corner of the mouth,
She will suffer constant trouble from backbiting.[112]
If one has a mole on the right cheek,

She will win her husband's lifelong love and respect.

If one's forehead is sedate and proper, and one's
'five features' are well-matched,
If one's mouth appears to be daubed with rouge,
and one's gait is easy-going,
If one's 'treasuries' and 'storehouses' are full,[113]
one's wealth and emolument ample,
She can rely on obtaining the lifelong affection
of some distinguished person."[114]



Immortal Wu Physiognomizes the Exalted and the Humble

When Immortal Wu had finished physiognomizing them, the women all bit their fingers, acknowledging the supernatural efficacy of his art. Hsi-men Ch'ing had sealed up five taels of silver to give to Immortal Wu and also provided five mace of silver for the servant

from Commandant Chou's headquarters, along with a note of thanks for his master.

Immortal Wu repeatedly refused to accept this remuneration, saying, "This humble Taoist:

Wanders like a cloud among the four quarters,[115]
Dining in the wind and sleeping in the dew,[116]
Transforming and saving the myriad creatures.

It was no more than a momentary impulse that led Commandant Chou to send me over here. What would I want this money for?[117]

I absolutely refuse to accept it.[118]

Hsi-men Ch'ing had no alternative but to bring out a bolt of muslin, saying, "Won't you accept this, Reverend Sir, to make a topcoat out of?"

Only then did Immortal Wu deign to accept it. Instructing his page boy to stow it in his scripture bag, he bowed in thanks to Hsi-men Ch'ing and saluted him in the Taoist manner by touching one hand to his forehead. Hsi-men Ch'ing escorted him as far as the main gate, where he proceeded nonchalantly to:

Float ethereally upon his way.[119]

Truly:

At the two ends of his staff he bears
the sun and the moon,
Within his solitary gourd he conceals
mountains and rivers.[120]

When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished seeing off Immortal Wu, he returned to the rear reception hall and asked Yüeh-niang and the others what they thought of the fortunes that had been predicted for them.

"The fortunes were all fine enough," said Yüeh-niang, "but there are three people whose physiognomies he was unable to read aright."

"Which three people's physiognomies was he unable to read aright?" asked Hsi-men Ch'ing.

“It was no great feat to suggest that Sister Li was expecting and would give birth to a distinguished son,” said Yüeh-niang, “since it is obvious enough that she is pregnant right now. So much for that. In physiognomizing our own Ta-chieh, he said that in the future she would suffer a calamity, but he didn’t specify what sort of a calamity it would be. In physiognomizing Ch’un-mei, he said that in the future she, too, would give birth to a distinguished son. No doubt he figured that you must have had your way with her. After all:

Who can anticipate what children and grandchildren
an individual may have?

But the prediction that I find it hardest to believe is that in the future Ch’un-mei will wear a pearl-decked cap and receive a title of nobility. After all, nobody in our family is an official, so where would a pearl-decked cap come from? And even if there were a pearl-decked cap, it would hardly end up on her head.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing laughed, saying, “He predicted that I would have the joy of:

Ascending to the clouds from the level ground,

and the glory of:

Appointment to office and augmented emolument.

Now where would I get an official appointment from?

“When he saw Ch’un-mei standing together with the rest of you, but dressed differently than a servant, wearing an informal cloud-shaped chignon enclosed in a fret of silver filigree, he must have assumed that she was either a natural or adopted daughter of ours, who might someday marry into a prominent household or bring a distinguished husband into the family. That’s why he said that she might be fated to wear a pearl-decked cap.

“It has always been true that:

You may calculate a person’s fate,
But you can’t predict his conduct.[121]
Likeness will appear in accord with mind,
Likeness will disappear in accord with mind.

Since Commandant Chou sent him to us, we could hardly disregard him. I had him physiognomize us so as not to be discourteous, that's all."

When he had done speaking, Yüeh-niang served him lunch in the master suite. After he had finished eating, Hsi-men Ch'ing took a plantain-leaf fan in his hand and strolled idly into the garden, ending up in the great summer-house, the Hall of Assembled Vistas.

All the way round blinds are suspended
over the latticework,
On all four sides flowers and trees cast
intersecting shadows.[122]

It was just high noon. All he could hear was:

From deep in the green shade,[123]
The strains of the cicada's stridulation.

Suddenly:

A breeze wafted the scent of the flowers,[124]
Invading the senses as it struck the nose.

There are two poems that testify to this:

Amid green trees the shade is luxuriant;
the summer days are long;
The reflections of towers and terraces
are upside-down in the pond.
The curtain of crystal beads is stirred
as the gentle breeze blows;
A single arbor of roses fills the entire
courtyard with fragrance.[125]

In the secluded grounds of the country villa
the summer grass is green;
The pomegranates are everywhere in bloom,
shining through the blinds.
Shadows of locust trees cover the ground;
it is just high noon;

From time to time one hears the stridulation
of new-fledged cicadas.[126]

Hsi-men Ch'ing sat down on a chair and was cooling himself with the fan in his hand when he saw the two page boys, Lai-an and Hua-t'ung, come in to draw some water from the well.

"One of you come over here," he said, "and fetch some ice from the underground storehouse to put in a basin for me."

Lai-an promptly came forward, and Hsi-men Ch'ing told him, "Go to the rear compound and tell your sister, Ch'un-mei, that if she has any damson punch, she should bring a jug of it here and put it in the ice bowl to cool."

Lai-an assented and went off on his errand. After some time had elapsed, who should appear but Ch'un-mei. She was dressed in her everyday garb, with her head uncovered, wearing an informal cloud-shaped chignon enclosed in a fret of silver filigree, a pale blue homespun tunic, and a peach red linen skirt. In her hand she carried a jug of candied damson punch.

Giggling as she came, she asked, "Have you had anything to eat yet?"

"I've already eaten in the master suite in the rear compound," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"No wonder you didn't come into our quarters," Ch'un-mei said. "I'll put this damson punch into the ice here, so you can drink it when it's chilled."

Hsi-men Ch'ing nodded his head. When Ch'un-mei had finished icing the damson punch, she came over and leaned on the back of his chair.

Taking the plantain-leaf fan out of Hsi-men Ch'ing's hand, she proceeded to fan him with it, asking, "What was the First Lady talking to you about just now?"

"About the way Immortal Wu physiognomized us," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"That Taoist stated, out of the blue, that I would wear a pearl-decked cap," said Ch'un-mei, "which caused the First Lady to

remark, ‘even if there were a pearl-decked cap, it would hardly end up on her head.’ As the saying goes:

Ordinary individuals cannot be judged
by their faces;
The ocean’s waters cannot be measured
by the peck.[127]

It has always been true that:

What you can’t round on the lathe,
You can round with an axe.[128]

How can one foretell who may not:

Depend upon his wife’s connections
for his daily bread?

Does she mean to suggest that I’m doomed to remain a slave in your household forever?”

“Little oily mouth,” Hsi-men Ch’ing laughed, “that’s nonsense. If you should bear a child someday, you’ll get to put your hair up like a regular lady.”

Thereupon, taking her onto his lap, he took her hand in his and began to toy with her, asking, “Is your mother in the rear compound, or in her own quarters? How is it I haven’t seen her?”

“Mother’s in her room,” said Ch’un-mei. “She told Ch’iu-chü to heat some water for a bath but couldn’t wait for her to finish and lay down on her bed for a nap.”

“After I’ve drunk the damson punch,” Hsi-men Ch’ing said, “I’ll go have some fun with her.”

Thereupon Ch’un-mei reached into the ice basin and poured out a cupful of damson punch for Hsi-men Ch’ing. When he had swallowed a mouthful, the bone-chilling cold:

Pierced his heart and numbed his teeth,

in the same way that:

Sweet dew suffuses the heart.[129]

In a little while he finished the punch and then, leaning on Ch’un-mei’s shoulder, made his way around by the postern gate until he arrived at Chin-lien’s bedroom. When he lifted aside the portiere

and went in, he saw that directly in front of him the woman was lying asleep on her newly purchased bedstead of inlaid mother-of-pearl.

It so happens that, because Li P'ing-erh had an alcove bedstead of inlaid mother-of-pearl in her quarters, the woman had subsequently induced Hsi-men Ch'ing to spend sixty taels of silver in order to buy a balustraded bedstead of inlaid mother-of-pearl for her. Facing the interior of the bed, the two side panels were decorated with inlaid mother-of-pearl designs depicting:

Towers and terraces, halls and chambers,[130]
Flowers and foliage, birds and animals.[131]

The three comb-back shaped back rests inside were decorated with the motif of pines, bamboos, and plum blossoms, the "three cold-weather friends." From the tester there hung:

Bed curtains of purple gauze,

held in place by:

Brocade sashes and silver hooks,

while from either side:

Aromatic pomanders were suspended.

The woman's:

Jade body was completely naked.

Wearing nothing but a bodice of red chiffon, under a coverlet of red silk, her head resting on a mandarin duck pillow, she lay on the cool bamboo bed mat:

In a state of slumbering oblivion.[132]

Within the room:

An exotic fragrance assailed the nostrils.[133]

No sooner did Hsi-men Ch'ing catch sight of her than, before he knew it, his:

Lecherous desires were suddenly aroused.

Ordering Ch'un-mei to close the door and go outside, he quietly took off his clothes and got into bed. When he lifted aside the silk coverlet, her jade body lay half concealed and half revealed. Bent on

mischief, he gently separated her two thighs, positioned his jade chowrie handle, and slowly inserted it into her vagina. By the time:

Her starry eyes flashed open with surprise,

he had already succeeded in thrusting and retracting several tens of times.[134]

Opening her eyes wide, the woman laughed, saying, “You crazy ruffian! When did you sneak in here without anyone’s knowing it? I was sleeping and didn’t realize it. I was just enjoying my sleep and you still want to plague me to death.”

“It’s only me, so it doesn’t matter,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “But if it were a strange man who got in, you’d probably still pretend not to realize it.”

“I’d just be wasting my breath on you!” the woman said. “Who else would have the:

Seven heads and eight galls,

to come into this room of mine? You’re the only one allowed in here. How can you be so:

Oblivious to distinctions of status?”[135]

It so happens that the woman, because she had overheard Hsi-men Ch’ing praising the whiteness of Li P’ing-erh’s body in the Kingfisher Pavilion the other day, had secretly mixed the stamens of jasmine blossoms with butter-fat and face powder and rubbed the mixture over her entire body, until it was:

White and glossy, shiny and smooth,
Exuding a palpable exotic fragrance,[136]

in the hope of gaining Hsi-men Ch’ing’s affection and replacing her rival in his favor.

Thereupon Hsi-men Ch’ing, observing that her body was snow-white, and that she was wearing the pair of scarlet sleeping shoes that she had just made, assumed a squatting position on top of her, lifted up her thighs with his two hands, and proceeded to thrust with all his strength:

Bending his head the better to observe,
The sight presented as he went in and out.[137]

“You *crazy* good-for-nothing!” the woman said. “What are you looking at so attentively? My complexion is black; no match for the white of Li P’ing-erh’s body, that’s all there is to it. Now that she’s pregnant, you’re:

Casually enamored and anxiously concerned,[138]

on her behalf. The rest of us are only pickups that you can pester like this whenever you please.”

“I hear you’ve been waiting for me to take a bath,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“How did you know that?” the woman asked.

Hsi-men Ch’ing told her what Ch’un-mei had said.

“You go ahead and bathe,” the woman said. “I’ll have Ch’un-mei bring the water in.”

It wasn’t long before the bathing tub was carried into the room and filled with hot water. The two of them got out of bed in order to:

Bathe together in the orchid-scented bath, and
Emulate the pleasures of fish in the water.

Thereupon:

Replenishing the bath and changing the water,[139]

they proceeded to bathe for a while.

Acting on a whim, Hsi-men Ch’ing placed the woman so that she was reclining faceup on the bathing-board, took her pair of feet in his two hands, straddled her and thrust away, lifting her body into the air as he rammed away at her no less than two or three hundred times. The sound they made was just like:

Crabs scuttling in the mud;
The noise was incessant.

The woman, fearing lest her:

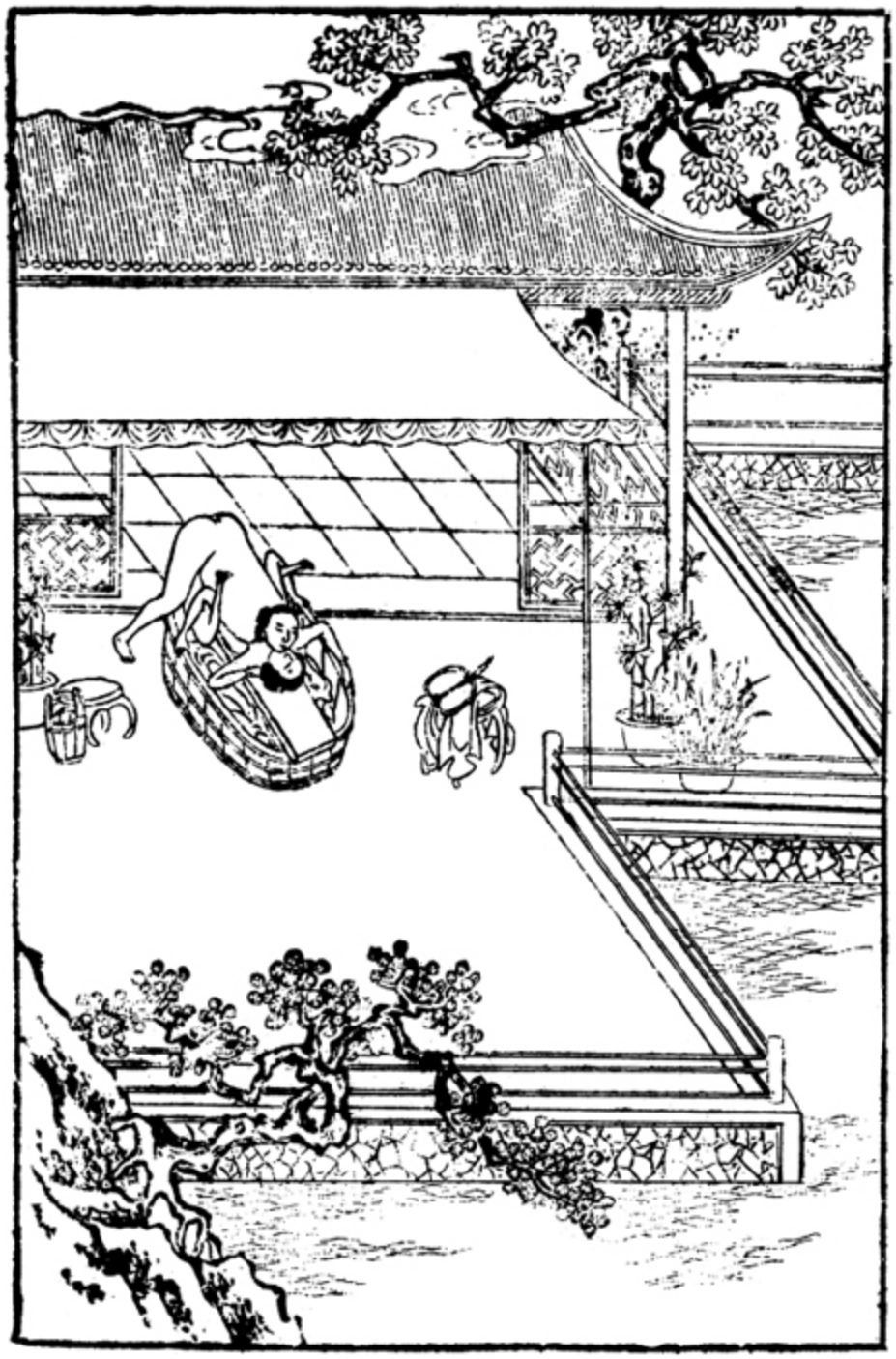
Fragrant locks should tumble awry,

held her clouds of hair in place with one hand while holding onto the bathing-board with the other. Meanwhile:

The swallow’s cries and oriole’s notes,[140]

that issued from her mouth:

Were too multifarious to describe in detail.
What did this battle look like? Behold:



P’an Chin-lien Enjoys a Midday Battle in the Bathtub

The waters of the flowery pond are agitated,
the ripples turbulent;
The turquoise curtains are rolled high,
autumn clouds threaten.
The talented gentleman's feelings are aroused,
he wants to engage;
The woman of beauty's heart is impatient
to show off her skill.
One of them is all aquiver as he sticks out
his adamantine spear;
The other is all aswagger as she brandishes
her implacable sword.
One of them "risks death and forgets life,"[141]
as he bores his way in;
The other proves "addicted to clouds and rain,"[142]
as she strives for victory.
With a *p'u-p'u tung-tung* the backsides
beat a tattoo;
With a *pi-pi po-po* the spear collides
with the sword.
With a *p'a-p'a t'a-t'a* they create a
resounding racket;
With a *p'eng-p'eng p'ai-p'ai* they end up
all of a heap.
Low-low, high-high, the water seems
to run upstream;
Splashing, plashing, the overflow
creates a freshet.
Slippery, slithery, how can they
call a halt?
Grasping, shoving, it is hard to
stay in place.
One comes, the other goes, ranging
south and north;[143]
One lunges, the other butts, seeking
east and west.

Hot steam, billowing, gives rise to
ominous clouds;
Redolent, perfumed; fragrant vapor
is dispersed.
One of them, propelling her craft
against the current,
Sets her jade legs into motion.
The other, just as the helmsman
grips the tiller,
Keeps her golden lotuses in hand.
One of them, like a stallion run amok,
shows off his prowess;
The other, like a pale-faced sorceress,
meets his cavalry charge.
Happy and joyous are the feelings of
the beautiful woman;
Rough and ready are the desires of
the young gentleman.
Topsy-turvy, their only pursuit
is gratification;
Higgledy-piggledy, their feelings
are all in a daze.
“A life-or-death struggle,”[144] neither one
will call a halt;
“To triumph in every battle,”[145] they vie
with heart and gall.
Continually protesting, again and again,
she threatens murder;
High-spirited and stiff-necked, his ardor
remains undimmed.
In ancient times and modern, such contests
have been countless;
But none of them was the equal of this
battle in the bathtub.

At the time, the two of them tangled in the water for a while, until Hsi-men Ch'ing ejaculated, bringing the contest to a halt. When they had rubbed themselves clean, the bathing tub was removed. Wearing nothing but short undershirts of thin floss silk, they got onto the bed, where a bed table had been prepared for them, replete with wine and delicacies.

"Bring some distilled spirits for your father to drink," the woman instructed Ch'iu-chü.

She also took some stuffed pastries out of a square box on the shelf of her bed cabinet and gave them to Hsi-men Ch'ing to eat, fearing he might have an empty stomach.

It was some time before Ch'iu-chü reappeared with a silver flagon of wine. The woman was just about to pour it into a cup when she felt it and, finding it to be ice cold, threw the contents right into Ch'iu-chü's face, soaking her:

Head and face alike.

"Why you lousy dead duck of a slave!" she railed at her. "I told you to decant it for him, but how could you have brought cold wine for Father to drink? Who knows what you've got on your mind?"

"Drag this slave out to the courtyard for me," she told Ch'un-mei, "and make her kneel down there."

"I had just gone out back," said Ch'un-mei, "to roll up Mother's foot bindings for her. I was hardly out of the way for a moment, and you've already gotten into mischief."

Pouting with her lips, Ch'iu-chü mumbled to herself, "Father and Mother have been drinking iced wine every day. Who could have known that today they would change their tune?"

When the woman heard this, she cursed her, saying, "*Why* you lousy slave! *What* did you say? Drag her over here."

"Give her ten slaps on each side of her face," she ordered Ch'un-mei.

"I wouldn't want to dirty my hands on that thick-skinned face of hers," said Ch'un-mei. "Mother, just have her kneel down with a stone balanced on her head, that's all."

Thereupon:

Without permitting any further explanation,
she was dragged out to the courtyard and made to kneel with a large stone balanced on her head. But no more of this.

The woman, once more, instructed Ch'un-mei to warm some wine and shared several cups with Hsi-men Ch'ing. The wine and the table were then removed, the silk bed curtains were let down, and Ch'un-mei was instructed to fasten the door to the room. The two of them then:

Arm around head and thigh over thigh,
Physically exhausted, went to sleep.

Truly:

If you do not find her on the peak of the
  Mountain of Teeming Jade,
You must seek her in King Huai's dream
  upon the Radiant Terrace.[146]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 30

LAI-PAO ESCORTS THE SHIPMENT OF BIRTHDAY GIFTS; HSI-MEN CH'ING BEGETS A SON AND GAINS AN OFFICE

Success and failure, flourishing and decay,[1]
  are all inconsequential;[2]
To deploy every device at your disposal[3]
  is likewise of no avail.
Human desires are never satisfied,[4] like
  a snake swallowing an elephant;[5]
The affairs of this world, in the end, are like
  a mantis seizing a cicada.[6]
There is no medicine that is able to cure[7]
  the aging of high officials;
No amount of money will purchase the virtue
  of one's sons and grandsons.[8]
To rest content with one's ordinary lot
  and take things as they come;
Is the way to enjoy a carefree life of
  free and easy wandering.[9]

THE STORY GOES that when Hsi-men Ch'ing and P'an Chin-lien had finished bathing, they went to sleep together in her room. Ch'un-mei was sitting on a cool chair outside in the corridor, stitching the sole of a shoe, when what should she see but Ch'in-t'ung:

Sticking out his head and craning his neck,
around the postern gate.

"What have you got to say," Ch'un-mei asked.

Ch'in-t'ung also noticed that Ch'iu-chü was kneeling in the courtyard with a stone balanced on her head and proceeded to prance around and point at her.

"You crazy jailbird!" Ch'un-mei railed at him. "If you have something to say, just say it, that's all. Why bother:

Gesticulating with both hands and feet?"

Ch'in-t'ung continued laughing for some time before saying, "Chang An, the caretaker of the family graveyard, is waiting outside to speak to Father."

"You lousy jailbird!" Ch'un-mei said. "So it's Chang An, is it? What's the need for:

Such a great show of consternation,
as though you'd seen a ghost, or something? Keep it quiet. Father and Mother are asleep inside the room. If you wake them up, you'll be done for. Just tell Chang An to wait outside a while."

Ch'in-t'ung went outside and, after waiting there for what seemed like half a day, came back again and peered around the postern gate, asking, "Sister, is Father up yet or not?"

"You crazy jailbird!" exclaimed Ch'un-mei.

"Barging right in without more ado,
that way! You gave me quite a start.

As though you didn't know any better,[10]
you've come back a second time like a homeless ghost."

"Chang An is still waiting for Father to come out and see him," said Ch'in-t'ung. "After speaking to him, he has to get out through the city gate before it's closed for the night."

"Father and Mother are fast asleep," said Ch'un-mei. "Who would dare disturb them? Tell Chang An to wait a little longer before going. If it becomes too late for him to get home today, tell him to go back tomorrow."

As they were talking, who would have thought that Hsi-men Ch'ing over-heard them from inside the room.

Calling Ch'un-mei inside, he asked, "Who's talking?"

"Ch'un-mei replied, 'The page boy, Ch'in-t'ung, has come in to say that the caretaker of the graveyard, Chang An, is outside and wants to have a word with you.' "

"Get me something to put on," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and I'll get up and go out."

While Ch'un-mei was helping Hsi-men Ch'ing into his clothes, Chin-lien asked, "What has Chang An come to talk about?"

"Chang An came the other day," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "to tell me that Widow Chao's country estate, which is adjacent to our ancestral graveyard, is being offered for sale, landed property and all. The asking price is three hundred taels of silver, but I'm only willing to give her two hundred and fifty taels. I instructed Chang An to negotiate with her. If the sale is agreed to, I'll have Pen the Fourth and Ch'en Ching-chi go out to pay over the silver.

"There are four wells on the grounds, complete with well railings, from which water can be drawn. If I buy this property, I'll open it up and combine it with my own. I plan to build three summerhouses, three reception halls, an artificial hill, a garden, a juniper hedge, a locust tree arbor, well pavilions, an archery range, a kickball field, and other recreational facilities. It may cost a few taels of silver to do it, but what of that."

"What indeed!" said the woman. "Go ahead and buy it. In the future when your womenfolk have occasion to visit the graveyard, they'll have something pleasurable to do when they get there."

When they had finished speaking, Hsi-men Ch'ing went out to the front of the compound to talk to Chang An.

Chin-lien got up and, pausing in front of her dressing mirror to:

Retouch her powdered face, and
Recomb her cloudy locks,

came out into the courtyard to see to the beating of Ch'iu-chü. Ch'un-mei went outside and called in Ch'in-t'ung to wield the cane.

Chin-lien interrogated the culprit, saying, “I told you to fetch the wine. But how could you have brought cold wine for your father to drink? It seems that if anyone in the household, great or small, has the temerity to offer you a word of criticism, you’re prepared to brazen it out:

With nail-like mouth and iron tongue.”[11]

She then shouted an order to Ch’in-t’ung, “Give this slave twenty strokes with the cane, well laid on.”

Ch’in-t’ung had only administered ten strokes when, luckily for the culprit, Li P’ing-erh came over with an ingratiating smile and persuaded her mistress to put an end to the punishment, so Ch’iu-chü was spared ten lashes. Chin-lien ordered her to kowtow to Li P’ing-erh, after which she let her get up and go off to the kitchen.

“Old Mother Feng,” said Li P’ing-erh, “has shown up with a fourteen-year-old slave girl in tow. Our second sister in the rear compound is going to buy her to serve in her quarters. The asking price is seven taels and five candareens of silver. She’d like you to come have a look at her before she completes the transaction.”

Chin-lien and Li P’ing-erh thereupon went back to the rear compound together. As expected, Li Chiao-erh asked Hsi-men Ch’ing for the money and paid seven taels of silver for the slave girl. She changed her name to Hsia-hua and employed her in her quarters. But no more of this. Let us put this strand of our narrative aside for a moment and speak of something else.

Let us now return to the story of how Lai-pao and Wu Tien-en escorted the shipment of birthday gifts to the capital. From the time they set out from Ch’ing-ho district, all along the way:

Every morning they took to the purple road;
Each evening they tramped the red dust.
When hungry they ate, when thirsty they drank;
Stopping by night and traveling by day.[12]

It was the time of the greatest heat, when:

The weather is steaming hot,
Melting rock and liquefying metal,

and travelers find it extremely rough going.

To make a long story short, one day they arrived outside the Myriad Years Gate of the Eastern Capital and sought out an inn at which to take lodgings for the night. The next day, bearing the consignment of birthday gifts with which they had been entrusted, they proceeded straight to the gate of Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching's mansion by the Heavenly River Bridge, where they paused to reconnoiter. Lai-pao told the manager, Wu Tien-en, to take charge of the gifts, while he, himself, donned his black livery and proceeded to salute the gatekeeper with a bow.

"Where do you come from?" the gatekeeper asked.

"We are servants of the Honorable Hsi-men Ch'ing of Ch'ing-ho district in Shantung," Lai-pao replied, "and have come to present birthday gifts to His Honor."

"You lousy dead duck of a convict!" the gatekeeper railed at him. "You may make much of your Honorable 'Eastgate' or Honorable 'Westgate'[13] where you come from. But at the present time, His Honor, our master, is:

Under but one man, and
Above a myriad men.[14]

No matter whether it be one of the:

Three dukes or eight ministers;

or whether it be a:

Noble scion or royal princeling;[15]

who would dare to use such presumptuous language before His Honor's mansion? Stand back, and make it snappy!"

Among the gatekeepers there was one who recognized Lai-pao and placated him, saying, "This is a newly appointed gatekeeper who has only been on the job a few days. He didn't recognize you. Don't take offense. If you want an audience with His Honor, wait until I ask Uncle Chai Ch'ien to come out and see you."

Lai-pao then reached into his sleeve, pulled out a packet of silver weighing one tael, and gave it to the man.

"That's not necessary as far as I'm concerned," the man said. "But add an equal amount and give it to these two functionaries. You've got to make allowances for them."

Lai-pao hastily produced three packets of silver, one tael for each, and distributed them accordingly. Only then did the original gatekeeper show something like a smile.

"Since you have come from Ch'ing-ho district," he said, "just wait a little, and I'll take you in first to see the majordomo, Chai Ch'ien. His Honor has just returned from burning incense at the Precious Tablet Temple of Highest Clarity[16] and is taking a nap in his studio."

It was some time before the majordomo, Chai Ch'ien, appeared. He was wearing sandals, white socks, and a long black silk Taoist robe.

As soon as Lai-pao saw him, he kowtowed, and Majordomo Chai returned his salutation, saying, "Your efforts on a former occasion are appreciated, and now you have come to present birthday gifts to His Honor."

Lai-pao handed him a sealed document and, after a servant had presented two bolts of Nanking silk and thirty taels of silver, said, "My master, Hsi-men Ch'ing, sends his respects to Master Chai.

Having nothing suitable to express his feelings,

he offers these paltry gifts for Master Chai to dispense as he sees fit. On a former occasion, in connection with the Wang Ssu-feng affair, he is deeply appreciative of Master Chai's efforts."

"These gifts," said Chai Ch'ien, "I really ought not to accept. But, enough! Enough! I will provisionally accept them."

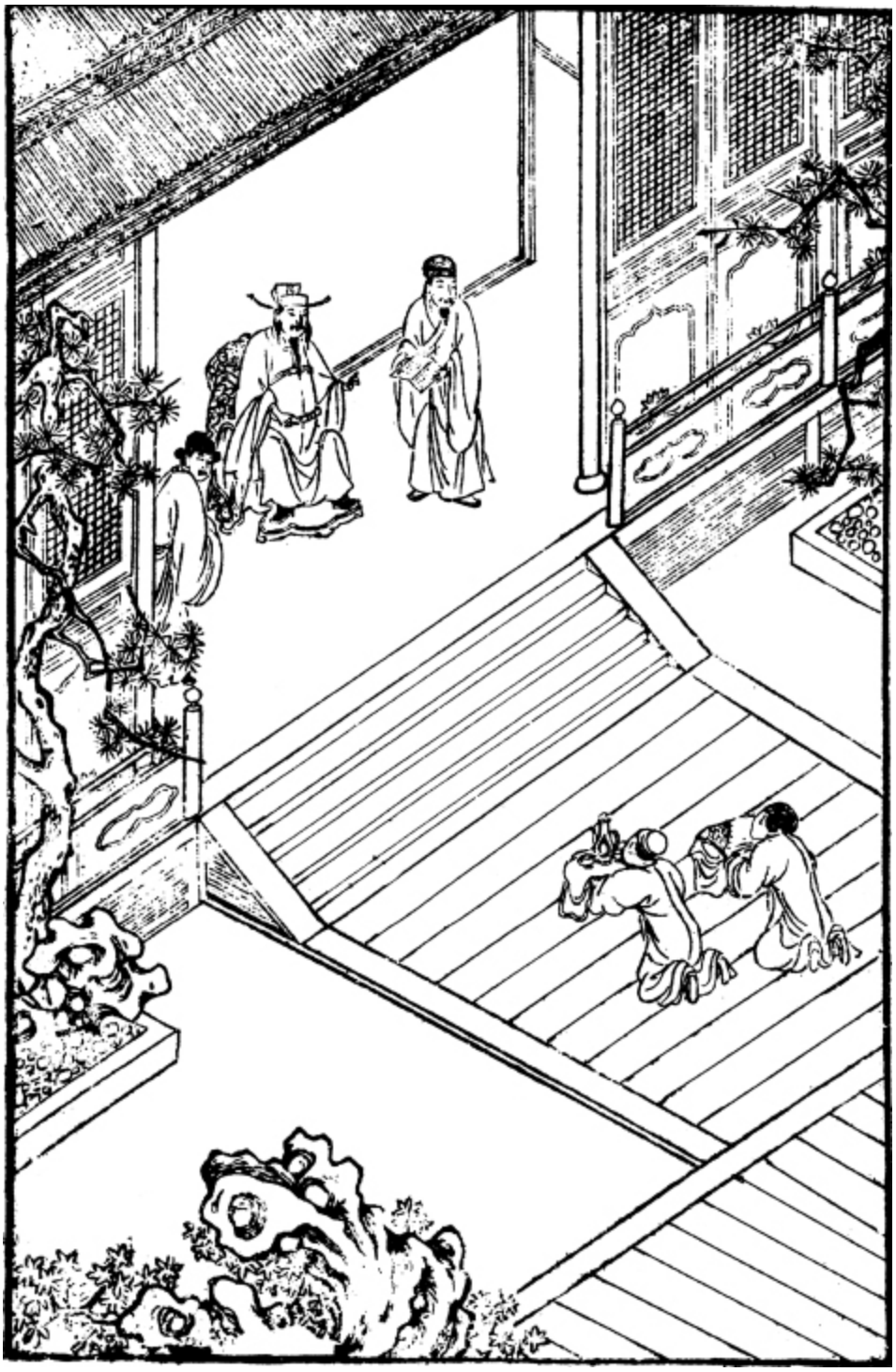
Lai-pao also handed him the list of birthday presents for the grand preceptor.

After perusing it, he returned it to Lai-pao, telling him, "Have the gifts carried in and wait inside the second inner gate."

It so happened that on the west side of the courtyard inside the second inner gate there was an eighteen-foot-wide structure, situated with its back to the south and its front facing north, where miscellaneous persons and those who came and went on errands were entertained with tea while they waited. In no time at all a young page boy brought out two cups of tea and gave them to Lai-pao and manager Wu Tien-en to drink.

In a short while, the grand preceptor, Ts'ai Ching himself, came into the reception hall. Chai Ch'ien first reported the situation to the grand preceptor, after which the latter ordered Lai-pao and Manager Wu to present themselves, and the two of them knelt down below the dais. Chai Ch'ien first handed up the list of birthday presents for the grand preceptor to peruse, while Lai-pao and Manager Wu made a formal presentation of the gifts. Behold:

Blazing yellow,
Gold pitchers and jade cups;
Glittering silver,
Enchased immortal figurines.
Created by skilled craftsmen, they cost
  much expenditure of effort;
Wrought by deft artificers, they are
  seldom seen among mankind.
Brocaded python robes,
Whose variegated colors dazzle the eye.
Heavy Nanking silks,
The golds and greens of which blend their hues.
The finest Yang-kao vintage from Fen-chou,



Lai Pao Presents the Shipment of Birthday Gifts

Encrusted with its authenticating seals.
Exotic fruits and seasonal rarities,
Piled high in platters and boxes.

How could he help but be pleased?[17]

"As for these gifts," he said, "It really wouldn't be right to accept them. You had better take them back with you."

This threw Lai-pao and his companion into such a state of consternation that they kowtowed below the dais, saying, "Our master, Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Having no other way to pay his respects,[18]

proffers these:

Paltry and insignificant gifts,[19]

to His Honor for him to dispense as he sees fit."

"If that is the case," said the grand preceptor, "let my attendants take possession of them."

The attendants and waiting men to either side then proceeded to remove all the presents and put them away.

The grand preceptor further went on to say, "The other day, in connection with that matter of the merchant Wang Ssu-feng in Ts'ang-chou, I have already sent someone to deliver a letter about the case to your grand coordinator, Hou Meng. Has he acted on the requested favor or not?"

"As a result of Your Honor's celestial grace," Lai-pao replied, "your letter no sooner arrived than the salt merchants involved were all taken before the Salt Distribution Commission, had their tallies returned to them, and were duly released."

The grand preceptor then turned to Lai-pao and said, "The presents I have provisionally accepted. But I have repeatedly benefited from your master's efforts on my behalf:

Without having anything to offer in return.

What am I to do? Does your master hold any post or commission?"

"My master," said Lai-pao, "is but:

A humble villager.

What post or commission could he hold?"

"So he holds no post or commission," said the grand preceptor. "Yesterday the emperor happened to consign several blank orders of appointment[20] to me. If I were to appoint your master to the post of

assistant judicial commissioner of the local office of the Shantung Provincial Surveillance Commission, in order to fill the vacancy left by the promotion of Assistant Judicial Commissioner Ho Chin, how would that be?"

Lai-pao hastily kowtowed in thanks, saying:

"His obligations to you are so great,
that even if my master and his entire household should have:
Their heads pulverized and their bodies dismembered,[21]
They could hardly hope to repay you."

Thereupon, the grand preceptor directed an attendant clerk to bring in his writing desk and forthwith signed and sealed a blank order of appointment, filling in Hsi-men Ch'ing's name, and designating him a battalion vice-commander in the Left Guard of the Embroidered-Uniform Guard unit of the Imperial Insignia Guard, and concurrently, assistant judicial commissioner in the Ch'ing-ho office of the Shantung Provincial Surveillance Commission.

Turning to Lai-pao, the grand preceptor said, "The two of you have gone to great pains in delivering these birthday gifts to me."

He then went on to ask, "What is the relationship to you of the person kneeling behind you?"

Lai-pao was about to report that he was an employee, when Manager Wu stepped forward and said, "I am Hsi-men Ch'ing's brother-in-law. My name is Wu Tien-en."

"So you are Hsi-men Ch'ing's brother-in-law," the grand preceptor said. "You look to me to have a decent enough demeanor."

Then he directed an attendant clerk to bring him an order of appointment, and said, "I'll appoint you to the post of station master of the Ch'ing-ho Postal Relay Station. You ought to be able to handle that."

Wu Tien-en was so flustered by this that he proceeded to:

Kowtow as though he were pounding garlic.[22]

The grand preceptor then took up another order of appointment and filled in Lai-pao's name, appointing him as a commandant on

the staff of the Prince of Yün.[23]

Both of them kowtowed in gratitude and took possession of their orders of appointment.

The grand preceptor instructed them, “Tomorrow morning you must report to the Ministry of Personnel and the Ministry of War in order to register your names, receive your credentials, and learn the deadlines by which you must report for duty in order to carry out your commissions.”[24]

He also instructed Chai Ch’ien, “See that they are entertained with food and wine in the anteroom on the west side of the courtyard, and get ten taels of silver to give the two of them for their expenses on the road.”

But no more of this.

Gentle reader take note: At that time, during the reign of emperor Huitsung:

The empire was badly governed;
Wicked ministers held positions of power,[25]
Slanderers and sycophants filled the court.[26]

The four wicked ministers, Kao Ch’iu, Yang Chien, T’ung Kuan, and Ts’ai Ching, presided at court:

Selling offices and bartering justice,[27]
Flagrantly trafficking in bribes;[28]
Promoting officials with scales in hand,
Pointing to the post and demanding the price.

Those who resorted to:

Truckling and insinuation,
Rapidly rose to high position.

Those who were:

Worthy, able, honest, and straightforward,
Went for years without appointment.

As a result:

Public mores deteriorated.
Venal officials and corrupt functionaries,
Overspread the entire empire.

The burdens of corvee and taxation were heavy,
The people were impoverished and bandits arose.
The empire was ripe for revolt.[29]
Solely because the wicked and sycophantic
occupied positions of power,
It was only appropriate that the Central Plain
should become soaked in blood.[30]

Chai Ch'ien then proceeded to invite Lai-pao and Manager Wu into an antechamber to be entertained. From the kitchen there appeared a complete array of soups, dishes, and savories, in:

Large platters and large bowls;
The meat as rich as flower cakes,[31]
The wine as lustrous as amber.

After they had eaten their fill, Chai Ch'ien turned to Lai-pao and said, "There is something that I would like to request your master to take care of for me, but I don't know if he would be willing to undertake it or not."

"How can you talk that way, Master Chai?" said Lai-pao. "In view of the way you have looked after my master's interests in dealing with His Honor, no matter what you might ask, you have but to command, and he will:

Not fail to comply with your orders."

"There is no reason for me to deceive you," said Chai Ch'ien. "In my attendance on His Honor, day in and day out, I have but the single person of my wife to solace me. I am approaching forty years of age, constantly suffer from a variety of ailments, and have not been able to have any children. In forwarding my request to your master, just ask him if there should happen to be any healthy young girls in your neighborhood, around fourteen or fifteen years old, if he could seek one out and send her to me. For whatever cost this may incur, I will see that he is fully remunerated."

Thereupon, he sealed up a return present and a reply for Hsi-men Ch'ing and entrusted them to Lai-pao, also presenting the two of them with five taels of silver for their expenses on the road.

Lai-pao repeatedly refused to accept this gratuity, saying, “Just now His Honor has already rewarded us. You had better take this back, Master Chai.”

“That was His Honor’s business,” said Chai Ch’ien, “while this is mine. There is no need for you to refuse.”

When they had finished eating and drinking, Chai Ch’ien said, “I’ll send a functionary from our staff to accompany you to your lodgings and facilitate your visit to the Ministry of Personnel and the Ministry of War tomorrow morning, to register your names, receive your credentials, and get started on your way. That will save you the need to go back and forth on the road in order to return here tomorrow. On receipt of my instructions, the ministries will not dare to delay in issuing your documents.”

Thereupon, he summoned a functionary named Li Chung-yu and told him, “You accompany these two gentlemen tomorrow when they go to the ministries to register their names and receive their credentials, and then report back to me.”

That functionary, along with Lai-pao and Wu Tien-en, then said goodbye, went out the gate of the mansion, and proceeded to the vicinity of Heavenly River Bridge, to a tavern that sold distilled spirits, in order to have a chat. After treating him to wine and food, Lai-pao gave Li Chung-yu three taels of silver and arranged with him that, early the next morning, he should take them first to the Ministry of Personnel and then to the Ministry of War, to register their names and receive their credentials.

On hearing that they came from His Honor the grand preceptor’s mansion, who would have dared to be dilatory, or refuse to:

Act upon it even in defiance of the law?

Chu Mien, the defender-in-chief of the Imperial Insignia Guard, promptly applied his seal, signed the authorizing documents, and transmitted them to the heads of the appropriate offices, thereby appointing Lai-pao to serve on the staff of the Princely Establishment of the Prince of Yün in Shantung. He also sent a calling card in reply to Majordomo Chai Ch’ien.

In less than two days, everything necessary had been taken care of, so they hired mounts and set out that very day to return to Ch'ing-ho district and report the good news. Truly:

Wealth and distinction are only to be gained
by guile and craft;
Success and fame are utterly dependent
on Teng T'ung's money.[32]

To resume our story, one day, during the dog days of summer, when the weather was extremely hot, the members of the Hsi-men family gathered in the great summerhouse, the Hall of Assembled Vistas, in order to enjoy the lotus blossoms, escape the heat, and drink wine together. Wu Yüeh-niang and Hsi-men Ch'ing occupied the places of honor, the various concubines and Hsi-men Ta-chieh arranged themselves on the two sides, and Ch'un-mei, Ying-ch'un, Yu-hsiao, and Lan-hsiang, the four household musicians, stood in attendance to play their instruments and sing. What were the revels like that day? Behold:

Urns are planted with green shrubs,
Vases are studded with red blossoms.
Portieres of beaded crystal furl
their "shrimps' whiskers,"
Screens of inlaid mica display
their peacocks' tails.
Platters are piled with unicorn flesh;
Smiling beauties proffer goblets
of iridescent hue.
Basins harbor submerged iced peaches;
Lovely women raise on high beakers
made of chrysoprase.
Dainties are prepared of the rarest kind,
Fruits are provided just in season.
Pipes and strings accompany the songs,
Producing a surge of pure melody
and lovely harmony.
Clad in silks and decked with jewelry,

There stand two rows of dancing girls
and singing boys.
During the feast the red ivory inlays
of the clappers resound,
The entire surface of the dancing skirts
is comprised of brocade.
Thus does one dissipate the idle days
within the Taoist's gourd;[33]
Journeying beyond the corporeal realm
in the universe of the drunk.[34]

As Hsi-men Ch'ing's wife and concubines were enjoying their wine, it was noticed that Li P'ing-erh was absent.

Turning to Hsiu-ch'un, Yüeh-niang asked, "What has your mistress returned to her room for? Why doesn't she come and drink wine with the rest of us?"

"My mistress is suffering from pains in the abdomen," Hsiu-ch'un replied. "She's sprawled out in her room at the moment but will be here shortly."

"Why don't you quickly go and speak to her?" said Yüeh-niang. "Tell her not to sprawl about that way, but come and sit down with us properly, and listen to the singing for a while."

Hsi-men Ch'ing then asked Yüeh-niang, "What's up?" and she replied, "Sister Li has suddenly developed abdominal pains and is lying down in her room. I've just sent her junior maidservant to ask her to join us."

Turning then to Yü-lou, she said, "Sister Li must be in the last month of her term. I fear it may be a miscarriage."

"Elder Sister," said P'an Chin-lien, "how could she be due in this month? My guess is it will be an eighth-month child. It's early days yet."

"If it's still too early," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "send a maidservant to invite the Sixth Lady to come and listen to the singing."

Before long, Li P'ing-erh duly made her appearance among them.

"I fear you've caught a chill of some kind," Yüeh-niang said to her. "Have a cup of hot wine and I'm sure you'll feel better."

Before long, the cups in front of each of them were filled with wine, and Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Ch'un-mei, "Sing the song suite that begins with the words:

Everyone fears the days of summer,

for us."

Ch'un-mei and the other members of the quartet, after seeing to it that:

The bridges on the psaltery were ranged like wild geese,

and:

The silken strings of the mandola were properly tuned,
Opened their ruby lips,
Exposed their white teeth,[35]

and proceeded to sing the song suite beginning with the tune "A Single Missive," the first line of which is:

Everyone fears the days of summer,[36]

etc., etc.

Li P'ing-erh had put in an appearance at the party, but her brows were knit, and without even waiting till the song suite was finished, she returned to her room. Though Yüeh-niang was listening to the lyrics of the songs, she was worried about her and sent Hsiao-yü to her quarters to see how she was.

When she returned, she reported, "The Sixth Lady is suffering from abdominal pains and is writhing about on her k'ang."

Yüeh-niang exclaimed in consternation, "I said that her time must have come, but Sister Six here insisted that it was too early for that. Why don't you call in a page boy and send him to fetch a midwife as quickly as possible?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing immediately ordered Lai-an, "Run like the wind and go fetch Midwife Ts'ai."

Thereupon, the wine-drinking came to a halt, and they all went to Li P'ing-erh's quarters to ask after her.

"Sister Li, how do you feel inside?" Yüeh-niang asked.

“First Lady,” Li P’ing-erh replied, “in both my chest cavity and my lower abdomen I have a painful sensation of downward pressure.”

“You ought to sit up,” said Yüeh-niang. “Don’t lie down any more. I’m afraid you might injure the fetus by writhing about that way. We’ve sent for the midwife, and she should be here any minute now.”

In a little while, Li P’ing-erh’s birth pangs gradually became more severe, and Yüeh-niang demanded to know, “Whoever was sent after the midwife, that she hasn’t shown up by this time?”

“Father ordered Lai-an to go,” said Tai-an.

“You jailbird!” Yüeh-niang cursed at him. “Why don’t you get a move on yourself, and go meet them? It was absolutely senseless to send that child of a slave on such an errand. He doesn’t know what’s urgent and what isn’t.”

“Quickly, get on a mule and go after them,” Hsi-men Ch’ing ordered Tai-an.

“It’s a matter of fiery urgency,” said Yüeh-niang, “and you handle it like any ordinary affair:

Just as slow and easy as you please.”

Now P’an Chin-lien, on seeing that Li P’ing-erh was about to give birth to a child, could not help being somewhat sore at heart. After observing the goings on in Li P’ing-erh’s quarters for a while, she pulled Meng Yü-lou outside with her, and the two of them stood by a pillar under the eaves of the anteroom on the west side of the courtyard, to get a breath of fresh air and have a chat.

“Ai ya-ya!” she exclaimed. “On top of everything else, when it’s as hot as it is, to crowd a whole roomful of people in there. It’s not as though a child were being born, but as if they all want to see an elephant lay an egg.”

After some time, who should they see coming through the gate but Midwife Ts’ai, who approached the group and asked, “Which of you is the mistress of the house?”

“This is the First Lady,” said Li Chiao-erh, at which Midwife Ts’ai prostrated herself and performed the kowtow.

“We’re imposing on you, Granny,” said Yüeh-niang, “but why has it taken you so long to get here?”

“Listen to me, and I’ll tell you all about it,” said Midwife Ts’ai:

I’m a midwife whose surname is Ts’ai,
Whose two feet can move really fast.
Bedecked with strange green and queer red,
Whatever fret I’ve got on, it’s awry.
My wire-inlaid earrings shine bright,
My yellow kerchief is fixed with a pin.
On arrival, I demand a tip wrapped in red,
Once seated, I expect good entertainment.
Be my client a spoiled girl from a noble house,
An imperial relative, or the mother of an emperor;
She’ll have to let me examine her as I like,
Strip off her clothes and handle her at will.
A breech birth will require a cesarean,
Difficult deliveries call for rough handling.
Whether it be the umbilical cord or the placenta,
If need be, I may have to tear it with my hands.
If the child live, I attend the third day lustration;[37]
If it should die, I clear out as fast as I can.
For these reasons, my patrons are numerous,
So, when called for, I’m not to be found.”

“That’s enough of your idle chatter,” said Yüeh-niang. “Be so good as to take a look at this lady, who’s about to bear a child.”

Midwife Ts’ai approached the bed, felt Li P’ing-erh’s body with her hands, and announced, “Her time has come.” She then went on to ask, “First Lady, do you have on hand the swaddling clothes and absorbent grass paper that will be needed?”

“I do,” replied Yüeh-niang, who then instructed Hsiao-yü, “Quickly now, go to my room and fetch them.”

To resume our story, when Meng Yü-lou saw that the midwife had arrived, she said to Chin-lien, “Midwife Ts’ai has come. Why don’t we go into the room and see what’s going on?”

Chin-lien, on the one hand, refused to budge, and on the other, said, “If you want to watch, go ahead; but, as for me, I don’t want to see it. She’s the sister with a child, so she’s in favor. Why shouldn’t people want to see her?

“A while ago, when I made the mistake of remarking that it seemed to me her child wasn’t due this month, and probably wouldn’t be until the eighth month, I got publicly chastised for it by Elder Sister. It seems to me that I really didn’t deserve anything like that, and it’s been bothering me ever since.”

“I, too, thought it would be a sixth-month child,” said Yü-lou.

“Now you’re talking nonsense, too,” said Chin-lien. “Let me work it out for you. She came here in the eighth month of last year. And she wasn’t any:

Chaste chrysanthemum of a virgin,[38]

either. The child could have been:

Conceived at an earlier time,
Only to be born in our house.

As a remarried wife, there’s no knowing how many men she may have been involved with. Moreover, it takes a month or two for the fetus to develop. Even if you assume it to be a child belonging to our family, and that I spoke incorrectly; if it had been an eighth-month child, there might have been a semblance of our family in it. But if it is a sixth-month child, it’s a case of:

Stepping on a low stool to paste up an effigy of
the Spirit of the Perilous Paths;
You’ll end up falling a hat’s-height too short.[39]
Once it has strayed out of familiar territory,
Where can you go to look for the missing calf?”[40]

As they were talking, whom should they see but Hsiao-yü, carrying the absorbent grass paper, swaddling clothes, and a little sleeping mat out from the rear compound.

Meng Yü-lou said, “These are things that Elder Sister has prepared for her own use when she is brought to bed with a child, sooner or later, herself. She is letting them be used today in response to the emergency.”

“One of them is the legitimate wife,” said Chin-lien, “and the other is merely a concubine. But it seems that, in the future, so long as it’s a childbearing competition they’re engaged in, though neither one should produce a satisfactory baby, any piecemeal excuse for one will do. Even if my case should be like that of:

The purchased hen who doesn’t lay eggs;

do you mean to say he’ll simply kill me?”

“In any case,” she went on to say, “No matter whether:

Things land right side up or upside down,[41]

one oughtn’t to make the mistake of:

The dog who bites the inflated bladder;
Only to find his excitement deflated.”[42]

“What kind of talk is that, Fifth Sister?” said Meng Yü-lou.

After that, whenever she saw that Chin-lien was blurting things out:

Without any consideration for the consequences,

she simply lowered her head, fiddled with her skirt, and declined to say anything in reply.

P’an Chin-lien leaned against the courtyard pillar with one hand, and stood with her foot resting on the raised threshold, cracking melon seeds with her teeth.

What should they see at this point but Sun Hsüeh-o from the rear compound, who had heard that Li P’ing-erh was in the process of bearing a child and had come running up in a state of obvious agitation:

Stumbling at every step,[43]

to see what was happening. Carelessly, in the dark shadow of the doorway, she tripped over the edge of the stylobate and nearly came a cropper.

Chin-lien, on seeing this, said to Yü-lou, “Just look at that ingratiating slavey of a concubine! You’d better take it easy! What are you in such a hurry to risk your life for? If you had really come a cropper by tripping up in the shadow there and had broken a tooth, it would cost a pretty penny. Sister, you’re like:

The radish peddler who tags along after the salt vendor:
forever horning in where you don't belong.[44]

If you ever bear a child yourself, I suppose they'll reward you, concubine that you are, with the silk hat of an official."

After some time, from inside the room they heard:

The sound of a gurgling cry,[45]

and knew that the baby had been born.

"Tell the head of the household," announced Midwife Ts'ai, "to prepare an appropriate gratuity. She has given birth to a boy."

When Wu Yüeh-niang reported this to Hsi-men Ch'ing, he hastily washed his hands:

Lit a full burner of incense,[46]

and made a vow, before Heaven and Earth and the tablets of his ancestors, to sponsor an elaborate performance, of one hundred and twenty degrees, of the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal, in order to pray for:

The safety of mother and child,
A fortunate parturition,[47] and
An untroubled accouchement.[48]

Now P'an Chin-lien, realizing that the birth of the child was resulting in the:

Jollification of the entire family,

who were:

All of a heap with excitement,

only became angrier than ever. Taking herself off to her own room, she closed the door, lay down on her bed, and wept.

At the time it was the twenty-third day of the sixth month in the sixth year of the Cheng-ho reign period.[49] Truly:

One may find things less than satisfactory
eight or nine times out of ten;
But it is seldom wise to tell anyone about
even two or three of them.

Midwife Ts'ai took charge of the baby, biting off it's umbilical cord, and burying the placenta. She then decocted a "heart

stabilizing potion”[50] for Li P’ing-erh to take and saw to it that the baby was comfortable. Yüeh-niang invited the midwife into the rear compound and entertained her with food and wine. When she was about to leave, Hsi-men Ch’ing gave her a single ingot of silver weighing five taels and also promised her a bolt of satin if she would come and preside at the third-day lustration ceremony. Midwife Ts’ai went out the gate with:

A thousand thanks and ten thousand
expressions of gratitude.

That day, when Hsi-men Ch’ing came into the room and first saw the armful of baby flesh, with its very fair complexion, he was as pleased as could be. The whole household was delighted. That night he slept in Li P’ing-erh’s quarters, in the room that had the bed in it, and constantly came over to the room with the k’ang, where the mother and child were, in order to see the baby.

The next day, before daylight, he got up early and sent off page boys to deliver ten square boxes of celebratory noodles to his relatives, neighbors, and friends. When Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta heard that a son had been born to Hsi-men Ch’ing, and that he had sent celebratory noodles to them, they hastened:

Covering two steps with every one,[51]

to come and offer their congratulations. Hsi-men Ch’ing invited them to have some noodles with him in the summerhouse.

He had no sooner seen them on their way and was busy in the reception hall, about to send a page boy for a go-between in order to locate a wet nurse to suckle the child, when Auntie Hsüeh suddenly showed up with a wet nurse in tow.

It so happened that she was a wife, of humble social origin, twenty-nine years old, who had just lost a child, less than a month before. Her husband was a soldier and couldn’t make a go of it. Fearing that if he went on campaign there would be no one to support her, he had decided to sell her and was only asking six taels of silver.

When Yüeh-niang saw that she seemed well-favored enough, she talked it over with Hsi-men Ch’ing, weighed out six taels of silver,

and retained her services. She gave her the name Ju-i, or As You Like It, and assigned her the task of caring for the baby and suckling him, early and late.

Old Mother Feng was also sent for, to look after the needs of the lying-in room, while Li P'ing-erh recuperated from childbirth. She was given five mace of silver per month to take care of the laundry.

The household had been in an uproar all day, when P'ing-an suddenly announced that Lai-pao and Manager Wu had returned from the Eastern Capital and were now dismounting at the front gate. Before long, the two of them came inside and, on seeing Hsi-men Ch'ing, congratulated him.

"What is there to be congratulated about?"[52]
asked Hsi-men Ch'ing.

The two men then gave a full account, from beginning to end, of how they had arrived in the Eastern Capital, obtained an interview with Grand Preceptor Ts'ai, and presented the gifts to him.

"When His Honor saw the gifts, he was very pleased," reported Lai-pao. "He said, 'I have repeatedly been the recipient of your master's munificence:

Without having any means of repaying him.'
He then asked if your ancestors had held any appointments, and I said, 'He is but:

A humble villager,
who doesn't hold a commission of any kind.'

"His Honor the grand preceptor then said that the emperor had consigned several blank orders of appointment to him, and that he would assign one of them to you. So he filled in your name, designating you as a battalion vice-commander in the Imperial Insignia Guard, and appointing you to the post of assistant judicial commissioner of the local office of the Shantung Provincial Surveillance Commission, in order to fill the vacancy left by the promotion of Assistant Judicial Commissioner Ho Chin. He then appointed your servant to the post of commandant of the Iron Bell Guard, to serve on the staff of the Prince of Yün, and appointed

Manager Wu to the post of station master of the Ch'ing-ho Postal Relay Station."

Thereupon, he took out the three uniformly signed and sealed orders of appointment, together with the authorizing credentials from the Ministry of Personnel and the Ministry of War, and the patent of nobility for his wife, and placed them on the table for Hsi-men Ch'ing to see.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw that these documents were stamped with numerous seals, indicating imperial authorization according to precedent,[53] and that he really had been appointed to the position of battalion vice-commander, before he knew it:

> Joy manifested itself about his temples
> and between his brows;
> Delight spread itself across his cheeks
> and smiling face.

Picking up the imperial decrees in his hand, and taking them back to the rear compound to show to Wu Yüeh-niang and the other members of the family, he said, "His Honor the grand preceptor has favored me with an appointment to the position of battalion vice-commander in the Imperial Insignia Guard, which carries with it the title of grand master of the fifth rank. This entitles you to receive a patent of nobility inscribed on patterned damask, to ride in a carriage embellished with seven aromatic spices, and to be addressed by the honorific title of lady. He also concurrently appointed Manager Wu to the post of station master of the Ch'ing-ho Postal Relay Station, and Lai-pao to the post of commandant on the staff of the Prince of Yün.

"When Immortal Wu physiognomized me he concluded that I would 'not fail to wear the silk hat of an official,' and would enjoy 'an ascent to the clouds from the level ground,' and today those predictions have come true. In hardly half a month both of these happy events have come to pass."

Then, turning to Yüeh-niang, he said, "This baby boy that Sister Li has just borne is certainly starting out on a firm footing. At the lustration ceremony on the third day, when we choose a name for

him, let's call him Kuan-ko, or Official Son, in commemoration of the occasion."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished showing the documents to Yüeh-niang, Lai-pao came in, kowtowed to Yüeh-niang and the rest, and talked to them for a while.



Hsi-men Ch’ing Begets a Son and Gains an Office

Hsi-men Ch’ing instructed him, “Tomorrow morning, take the documents to the yamen of the Provincial Surveillance Commission

to show to Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, and have Manager Wu deliver his documents to the district yamen."

Lai-pao then took his leave of Hsi-men Ch'ing and went home.

The following day, by the time the third-day lustration ceremony was completed, Hsi-men Ch'ing's relatives, neighbors, and friends all knew that his Sixth Lady had given birth to a boy, and that, before three days were out, he had had the good fortune to see:

Officialdom and emolument descend upon his gate,

in the form of an appointment, out of the blue, to the post of battalion vice-commander. Nor did anyone fail to try his best to curry favor with him by bearing gifts and offering congratulations.

People come and people go,[54]
All day long, without ceasing.[55]

As the saying goes:

When fortune comes, who does not come;
When fortune does not come, who comes?

Truly:

When fortune comes, even the crudest iron
looks shiny;
When luck recedes, even the truest gold
lacks luster.[56]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 31

CH'IN-T'UNG CONCEALS A FLAGON AFTER SPYING ON YÜ-HSIAO; HSI-MEN CH'ING HOLDS A FEAST AND DRINKS CELEBRATORY WINE

TO THE TUNE "Moon on the West River":

If his family be rich, the person will be distinguished;
When others meet him they are sure to yield him precedence.
Poor officials presume on the indulgence of their superiors;
Each of them acknowledging the deference due to money.

In marriage alliances he looks only for social prestige;
In business transactions he seeks merely to gain influence.
Not knowing that success and failure reside in the heart,
He relies only on what he can see before his eyes.

The story goes that the next day Hsi-men Ch'ing sent Lai-pao to the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission and to the district yamen to deliver his credentials.

At the same time he commissioned someone to make an official hat for him and summoned Tailor Chao to come to his home with four or five other tailors to take charge of measuring and cutting the fabric in order to provide him with a set of official garments. He also called in a contingent of artisans to manufacture seven or eight four-finger-wide official girdles for him, with decorative plaques

made of carved openwork, mica, rhinoceros horn, “crane’s crest red,”[1] tortoiseshell, fishbone, and aloeswood.[2] We will say no more, for the moment, about the goings on in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s household.

To resume our story, that same day Wu Tien-en paid a visit to Ying Po-chüeh’s house and repeatedly besought his aid in asking Hsi-men Ch’ing for a loan of silver to expend, both high and low, in connection with his appointment as station master.

“If I am successful in borrowing the silver,” he promised Ying Po-chüeh, “I’ll set aside ten taels in order to buy you a present as an expression of my gratitude, Elder Brother.”

As he spoke, he got down on his knees, which threw Ying Po-chüeh into such consternation that he helped him up with one hand, saying, “This is a case of:

Helping someone to accomplish his legitimate desires.[3]

The fact that His Honor saw fit to send you on this mission to the Eastern Capital, which made it possible for you to benefit by the windfall of this position, is no ordinary event.”

He then went on to ask, “How much will you need for present purposes?”

“There is no reason to deceive you, Elder Brother,” Wu Tien-en replied.

“The situation of my household is such that I haven’t a candareen to my name. In the days to come the costs of assuming office, calling upon my superiors, supplying:

The customary presentation gifts,[4]

hosting a banquet, and providing myself with appropriate clothing, horse and saddle, etc., at the very least, will come to seventy or eighty taels of silver. How am I to cope with it? Now I have drafted a promissory note but have not yet presumed to write in the amount. I hope that whatever happens, Elder Brother, you will consent to help me out by putting in a good word from the side. If I am successful:

Your kindness will be amply rewarded,
I will never dare to forget it.”

Ying Po-chüeh looked over the promissory note and then said, “Brother Wu, this seventy or eighty taels of silver that you propose to borrow will not be sufficient for your needs. If you take my advice, you’ll pick up a brush and write in the sum of a round hundred taels. More likely than not, out of consideration for me, he won’t demand any interest from you, and you’ll have enough to cover your expenses. It won’t be too late to pay him back, a little at a time, in the future, after you’ve assumed office. As the common saying aptly puts it:

Borrowed rice will go into your pot;
Begged rice will not go into your pot.[5]

As long as you can stall him off:

Every day is another morning and afternoon.[6]

How much the more should this be true since you’ve done business on his behalf. These few taels of silver for you are hardly anything likely to weigh on his mind.”

When Wu Tien-en heard these words, he thanked him again and again and proceeded, on the spot, to write in the sum of a hundred taels on the promissory note. Thereupon, having finished their tea, they got up together and made their way to Hsi-men Ch’ing’s gate.

Ying Po-chüeh asked the gatekeeper, P’ing-an, “Is your father up yet, or not?”

“Father’s already up,” replied P’ing-an. “He’s in the summerhouse watching the artisans who are making up official girdles for him. I’ll go tell him you’re here.”

Thereupon, he went straight in and reported to Hsi-men Ch’ing, “Ying the Second and Uncle Wu the Second are here.”

“Ask them to come in,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Before long the two of them found themselves inside, where they saw that there were a considerable number of tailors and artisans working away, hugger-mugger, at their tasks. Hsi-men Ch’ing, wearing an informal skullcap and a brocade robe, was sitting in the veranda with Ch’en Ching-chi, looking on as the latter wrote out his curriculum vitae in an accordion-bound album for presentation to

his official superiors. When he saw the two of them, he bowed and offered them a seat.

"Brother," Ying Po-chüeh asked, "have you presented your curriculum vitae and your order of appointment yet?"

"This morning," Hsi-men Ch'ing replied, "I sent a servant to the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission to deliver my order of appointment. I'm getting my curriculum vitae ready now, but I haven't sent it to Tung-p'ing prefecture or the district yamen yet."

When he had finished speaking, the page boy, Hua-t'ung, served them with tea. After they were done with the tea, Ying Po-chüeh said nothing about Manager Wu's business but stepped down from the veranda to take a look at the artisans as they worked on the manufacture of the official girdles.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw him pick up a girdle to examine it, he played directly to the gallery, saying, "Take a good look. What do you think of these girdles I've managed to procure for myself?"

Ying Po-chüeh:

Expressing the most fulsome admiration,[7]

praised them, saying, "Who else but you, Brother, would know where to find the like? Each of them is a finer girdle than the last. They are rarely to be seen as wide and capacious as this. Regarding the rest of them, enough said; but as for this girdle with its decorative plaque of rhinoceros horn, and this one of 'crane's crest red,' you couldn't find the like in the entire metropolis, though you had the money in hand.

I am not flattering you to your face.[8]

They say that Chu Mien, the defender-in-chief of the Embroidered Uniform Guard in the Eastern Capital, though he may possess girdles of jade and girdles of gold, does not have anything to compare to this rhinoceros horn girdle. This is the horn of the water rhinoceros, not the horn of the dry land rhinoceros. The latter is not worth anything. The horn of the water rhinoceros is called 'Heaven penetrating rhinoceros horn.'[9] If you don't believe me, bring a bowl

of water, put the rhinoceros horn in it, and it will divide the water in two. This is:

A priceless treasure.[10]

Moreover, if you ignite it at night it will illuminate an area of a thousand li, and the flame will not be extinguished all night."

"Brother," he went on to ask, "how much silver did it cost you to obtain this rarity?"

"You two try to guess the price," Hsi-men Ch'ing said.

"There's no market rate for things like this," said Ying Po-chüeh. "How could we ever guess correctly?"

"I'll tell you then," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "This girdle comes from the household of Imperial Commissioner Wang on Main Street. Yesterday evening someone heard that I was in the market for girdles and came particularly to tell me about it. I sent Pen the Fourth back and forth several times with seventy taels of silver to try to buy this girdle from them, but they insisted on holding out for a hundred taels."

"It would be hard to find one as wide and handsome as this," said Ying Po-chüeh. "Brother, when you put it on and go forth in days to come you'll cut quite a figure. Even your colleagues will covet it when they see it."

Thereupon, after fulsomely praising it for a while, he sat down.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then turned to Manager Wu and asked him, "Have you delivered your credentials or not?"

"Brother Wu has not yet delivered his credentials," Ying Po-chüeh responded. "Today he has made a point of begging me to trouble you on his behalf. Although he has benefited from your patronage in sending him to the Eastern Capital to escort the consignment of birthday presents, as a result of which he has received this appointment from the grand preceptor, so that it is just as if you had uplifted him yourself, it is also his personal good fortune. As the saying goes:

From the first rank to the ninth rank,[11]

All are the subjects of the emperor.

However, at the present time he doesn't have any money available at home. So he has besought my aid, saying, 'At present the costs of assuming office, calling upon my superiors, hosting a banquet, and providing myself with appropriate clothing, and the like, will amount to a sizable sum of silver.

One guest does not trouble two hosts.

Where am I to go to come up with it?'

"Brother, there's no help for it. Out of consideration for me, if you have any silver to spare, lend a few taels to him in order to sustain him in this exigency. If you help him out in this matter, in the future, when he has assumed his official post, he will:

Carry rings and knot grass,[12]

never daring to forget that you are his great benefactor. Aside from the fact that he is an old employee in your establishment, who is accustomed to come and go as your protege, from first to last, who knows how many officials and functionaries in:

Other cities and other prefectures,

you have helped out in similar circumstances. If you were not to do so, where would you have him go to take care of this matter?"

"Brother Wu," he went on to say, "bring out that promissory note of yours and let His Honor see it."

Wu Tien-en hastily pulled it out of his pocket and gave it to Hsi-men Ch'ing to examine. When he saw that it was made out for a loan of a hundred taels of silver, that Ying Po-chüeh was the guarantor, and that it promised to pay interest of five percent per month, Hsi-men Ch'ing took up a brush and crossed out the interest.

"Since Brother Ying the Second is acting as guarantor," he said, "it will suffice if you repay me the principal of one hundred taels in the future. I imagine you will need a sum of silver like this to negotiate things, both high and low, satisfactorily."

Thereupon, he put away the promissory note.

Just as he was about to send to the rear compound for the silver, all of a sudden, a card was delivered from Judicial Commissioner Hsia of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, who had also sent along a professional scribe for his benefit. The three categories of

functionaries in the yamen had also sent copies of their curricula vitae and deputed twelve orderlies to be placed at his service. They wanted to know the date on which he intended to assume office and what his courtesy name and style were, so that his colleagues in the yamen could prepare the customary gifts when they came to offer their congratulations.

Hsi-men Ch'ing consulted Master Hsü, the yin-yang master, who determined that the stem-branch combination designating the second day of the seventh month ended with the branch *tzu*, which is governed by the god Green Dragon, making it an auspicious day, and that the hour *ch'en* (8:00 A.M.), which is governed by the god Metal-bound Casket, would be an appropriate time at which to assume office.[13] He therefore sent a calling card with this information to Judicial Commissioner Hsia and rewarded the scribe with five mace of silver, but there is no need to describe this in further detail.

Ying Po-chüeh and Wu Tien-en were still sitting in the summerhouse when what should they see but Ch'en Ching-chi emerging from the rear compound with the sum of a hundred taels of silver in hand.

Hsi-men Ch'ing directed him to give it to Manager Wu, saying, "Brother Wu, in the future if you merely return me the capital that will suffice."

Wu Tien-en accepted the silver, on the one hand, and then kowtowed in gratitude.

Hsi-men Ch'ing said, "I won't keep you any longer. Go take care of your business at home. But Brother Ying, here, I'll retain a while. There's something I want to talk to you about."

Wu Tien-en, holding the silver in hand, went out the gate as happy as could be.

Gentle reader take note: Later on, after the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing, the state of the family was such that:

Its fortunes collapsed and its influence declined.

Wu Yüeh-niang preserved a chaste widowhood and gave her maidservant Hsiao-yü to Tai-an as his wife. The household page boy

P’ing-an absconded with jewelry stolen from the pawnshop and squandered it on a pair of prostitutes in the Southern Entertainment Quarter. When he was apprehended and brought before Station Master Wu, the latter subjected him to severe finger-squeezing and flogging, coercing him into false testimony that Yüeh-niang had been engaged in hanky-panky with Tai-an, in order to force her to appear in court, thereby:

Requiting kindness with enmity.

But this is a subsequent event; having mentioned it, we will say no more about it. Truly:

Flowers that do not bear seeds
should not be planted;
People that lack righteousness
should not be cultivated.[14]

At this juncture, Pen the Fourth, who had been sent to Tung-p’ing prefecture and the district yamen to deliver copies of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s curriculum vitae, came back to report on his mission, and Hsi-men Ch’ing invited him to join Ying Po-chüeh and himself in keeping company with Master Hsü, the yin-yang master, for a meal.

Just as they were eating their meal, whom should they see but Hsi-men Ch’ing’s brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, who had come to pay his respects. Master Hsü then got up to leave and, after a while, Ying Po-chüeh also bade his host farewell, went out the gate, and headed straight for the home of Manager Wu.

Wu Tien-en had already set aside and sealed up ten taels of silver as a guarantor’s fee, which he proffered to Ying Po-chüeh with both hands and then proceeded to kowtow.

Ying Po-chüeh said, “If it hadn’t been for the clever way I broached the subject with him, no matter what you had done, he could never have been induced to make this loan to you. As for this hundred taels of silver he’s given you, no matter how you expend it, both high and low, you won’t have any need to spend it all, so you can keep half of it to defray your household expenses.”

Wu Tien-en, having duly rewarded Ying Po-chüeh, provided himself with an official girdle and appropriate clothing and selected

a propitious day on which to report to his superiors and assume office. But no more of this.

At the same time, the presiding magistrate of the district, Li Ta-t'ien, together with his three principal colleagues, the vice-magistrate, assistant magistrate, and docket officer, sent someone to deliver the traditional congratulatory gifts of mutton and wine to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Magistrate Li also sent him, along with his card, a young man to wait upon him. He was just seventeen years old and was a native of Ch'ang-shu district in Su-chou prefecture. His nickname was Little Chang Sung,[15] and he had begun his career as a "gate-boy" in the district yamen.[16] He had a naturally clear-cut appearance:

His face looked as though it were powdered,[17]
His teeth were white and his lips were red.[18]

Moreover:

He knew how to read and write,

and was good at:

Singing southern-style songs.

He was wearing a long gown of black chiffon, sandals, and white socks.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw how accomplished the young man appeared to be, he was utterly delighted. He sent a card expressing his appreciation to Magistrate Li, agreed to retain the young man in his service, and changed his name to Shu-t'ung, or Book Boy. He had a complete outfit of clothes made for him, including new boots and a new hat, and did not have him accompany him when he went out on horseback, but put him in charge of his studio, where he was responsible for his social correspondence, and gave him custody of the key to the garden gate.

Hsi-men Ch'ing's crony, Chu Jih-nien, also recommended a fifteen-year-old page boy to wait on him. His name was changed to Ch'i-t'ung, or Chess Boy.[19] Every day he and Ch'in-t'ung were deputed to carry his letter case and card case and accompany him when he went out on horseback.

On the day that he assumed office, Hsi-men Ch'ing hosted a lavish banquet in the yamen of the Provincial Surveillance Commission. Summonses were issued mandating the attendance of musicians from the licensed quarter, together with their file leaders and appearance monitors, to:

Play wind and percussion instruments and sing,

for the entertainment of the guests. The party in the rear hall of the yamen continued until sunset before breaking up.

Every day Hsi-men Ch'ing paraded through the streets riding on a large white horse, wearing on his head the black silk hat of an official, dressed in a round-collared robe emblazoned with a mandarin square of variegated embroidery featuring a lion with a ruffled mane,[20] a four-finger-wide girdle with a decorative plaque of gilded aloeswood, and white-soled black boots, escorted by not less than ten orderlies who shouted to clear the way, holding aloft a large black flabellum to protect him from the sun:

Clamoring in front and crowding behind.[21]

When he came home after formally assuming office, he first went to pay his respects to his fellow officials in the prefectural and district yamens, the Regional Military Command, the office of the local military director-in-chief, and the left and right battalions of the Ch'ing-ho Guard, and only after that, to his relatives, friends, and neighbors. His public proceedings were on a gloriously lavish scale, while at home he:

Accepted presents and received cards,
All day long, without ceasing.

Truly:

On a white horse with bloodred trappings
he is newly caparisoned;[22]
Even those with no claim to relationship
insist on being related.[23]
When fortune comes, even the crudest iron
looks shiny;

When luck recedes, even the truest gold
lacks luster.

From the time that he assumed office, every day Hsi-men Ch'ing officiated in the local yamen of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, where he took his place on the bench, held roll call, and tried the cases that came before him.

Light and darkness alternate swiftly.
Before anyone knew it, the full-month celebration[24] of Li P'ing-erh's accouchement rolled around. Wu K'ai's wife, Wu the Second's wife, Aunt Yang, Old Mrs. P'an, Wu Yüeh-niang's elder sister, Ch'iao Hung's wife, and many other female relatives and neighbors all sent presents in honor of Kuan-ko's full-month celebration. Li Kuei-chieh and Wu Yin-erh from the licensed quarter, on learning that Hsi-men Ch'ing had been appointed to the post of assistant judicial commissioner in the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission and had concurrently fathered a son, also sent lavish presents and engaged sedan chairs to come and offer their congratulations.

On that day Hsi-men Ch'ing provided a feast in the great reception hall in the front compound for the entertainment of the female guests. Ch'un-mei, Ying-ch'un, Yü-hsiao, and Lan-hsiang were all dressed up to befit the occasion and joined Yüeh-niang in the banquet area to pour the wine and hold the flagons for the female guests.

It so happens that every day when Hsi-men Ch'ing came home from the yamen, on arriving at the reception hall in the front compound he would take off his formal clothes and have Shu-t'ung fold them up for him and put them in his studio, wearing only his official hat as he proceeded into the rear compound. When he got up the next morning, he would send a maidservant to the studio to get them for him.

Recently he had fixed up an antechamber on the west side of the courtyard housing the great reception hall as his studio and furnished it with a bed, desk, table, chairs, a standing screen,

brushes, inkstones, a zither, books, and the like. At night Shu-t'ung would place his bedding on the footboard of the bed and sleep there. The next morning, before Hsi-men Ch'ing had appeared, he would straighten things up, sweep the studio clean, and be prepared to wait on him. Whoever's quarters Hsi-men Ch'ing might choose to spend the night in, in the morning a maidservant from those quarters would be sent out to the front compound to fetch his formal clothes for him.

What with all this:

Coming to fetch and taking away,

who would have thought that this young man who, in the first place, had begun his career as a "gate-boy" and was a likely looking lad with a naturally clear-cut appearance, and, in the second place, was given the opportunity of:

Engaging in badinage and repartee,

with the maidservants from all the quarters, should have ended up becoming familiar with them. Thereupon, he secretly struck up a flirtation with Yü-hsiao from the master suite.

One day it was one of those occasions on which:

Something was destined to happen.

The young man had just gotten up, ignited a stick of incense on the surface of the bed in the studio, set his dressing mirror on the windowsill to do his hair, and was engaged in binding it with a red silk ribbon, when, unexpectedly, Yü-hsiao from the master suite pushed open the door and came in.

When she saw what he was doing, she said, "You lousy jailbird! Late as it is, you're still:

Painting your brows and making up your eyes.

Father will be right out as soon as he's finished eating his congee."

Shu-t'ung paid no attention but continued binding up his topknot.

"Father's clothes have been folded up," said Yü-hsiao. "Where did you put them?"

"They're lying right there at the southern end of the bed," Shu-t'ung said.

“He’s not wearing that outfit today,” said Yü-hsiao. “He told me to tell you that he wants to wear that jet[25] brocade round-collared robe emblazoned with a gold lame mandarin square, and the jade-colored undergown.”

“That outfit is in the clothes cabinet,” said Shu-t’ung. “I put it away only yesterday, and today he wants to wear it again. Sister, open up the door of the cabinet and take it out yourself.”

Yü-hsiao, however, did not proceed to get the clothes, but came right up to him and watched him binding his hair.

“You crazy louse of a jailbird!” she teased him. “You’re binding your hair with red ribbon just like a woman, and affecting such a bouffant hairdo over your temples too.”

Then, noticing that on his undershirt of bleached Hsiang-yang ramie there were suspended a pink silk scent bag and a green silk scent bag, she asked him for one of them, saying, “Give me this pink one.”

“Even someone else’s prized possession you want for yourself,” said Shu-t’ung.

“It’s inappropriate for a boy like you to wear a pink one,” said Yü-hsiao. “But it would be just right for me.”

“It’s a good thing that’s all you want,” said Shu-t’ung. “If it were a man in question, you’d hanker after him too, I suppose.”

Yü-hsiao deliberately gave him a pinch on the shoulder, saying, “You lousy jailbird, you’re like someone:

Reduced to peddling his effigies of the Gate Gods[26]
in a narrow passageway:
Who knows what sort of rubbish you’ll come up with.”

Thereupon:

Without permitting any further explanation,

she took hold of the two scent bags and, without bothering to untie them, tore them loose from the cords by which they were fastened, and tucked them into her sleeve.

“You’re certainly no respecter of persons,” protested Shu-t’ung. “You’ve managed to rip my girdle apart.”

Yü-hsiao gave him a playful blow with her fist, which provoked Shu-t'ung into responding, "Sister, stop pestering me. Wait until I've finished binding up my hair."

"Let me ask you," said Yü-hsiao, "since I haven't heard. Where's Father off to today?"

"Today," Shu-t'ung replied, "Father's going to see off the third officer in the district yamen, Assistant Magistrate Hua Ho-lu. There's to be a party hosted by Eunuch Director Hsüeh, the supervisor of the local imperial estates. He should get home early. This afternoon, I understand, he's arranged to meet with Uncle Ying the Second in order to pay out the silver for the purchase price of the Ch'iao family's property across the street. They'll be having a drink over there."

"You wait right here. Don't go anywhere else," said Yü-hsiao. When I come back, I'll have something to say to you."

"I understand," said Shu-t'ung.

Thereupon, having reached an understanding with him, Yü-hsiao took the clothes and went straight back to the rear compound.

In a little while, Hsi-men Ch'ing came out, called for Shu-t'ung, and instructed him, "You stay at home. Don't go anywhere else. First off, I want you to write out twelve invitations, on scarlet paper, with sealed envelopes. Tomorrow, on the twenty-eighth, I'm inviting some official guests to a party to celebrate the birth of Kuan-ko. Tell Lai-hsing to purchase the provisions, engage the necessary cooks and waiters, and see that all the place settings are properly prepared. Send Tai-an with two orderlies to deliver the invitations and engage the singing girls. Let Ch'in-t'ung stay here to look after the wine for the female guests."

When he had finished with his instructions, Hsi-men Ch'ing mounted his horse and set off for his farewell party.

By this time the female guests invited by Wu Yüeh-niang and her sorority of concubines had all arrived. At first they were served tea in the summer-house, and only after that did they take their seats in the great reception hall, where:

Screens display their peacocks' tails, and

Cushions conceal their hibiscus blossoms.[27]

Four singing girls had been engaged to play and sing for the entertainment of the company.

Sure enough, Hsi-men Ch'ing did return home in the early afternoon, where a table setting of wine and delicacies had been set aside for him. After inviting Ying Po-chüeh and Ch'en Ching-chi to join him, he set out with seven hundred taels of silver in hand for the closing on his purchase of the Ch'iao family property across the street.

While the female guests were in the midst of drinking their wine, lo and behold, Yü-hsiao secreted a silver flagon of wine, along with four pears and a tangerine and headed straight for the antechamber to give them to Shu-t'ung to enjoy. When she pushed open the door, to her surprise, Shu-t'ung was not there. Fearing lest someone should see what she was doing, she set her burden down, flagon and all, and took herself off.

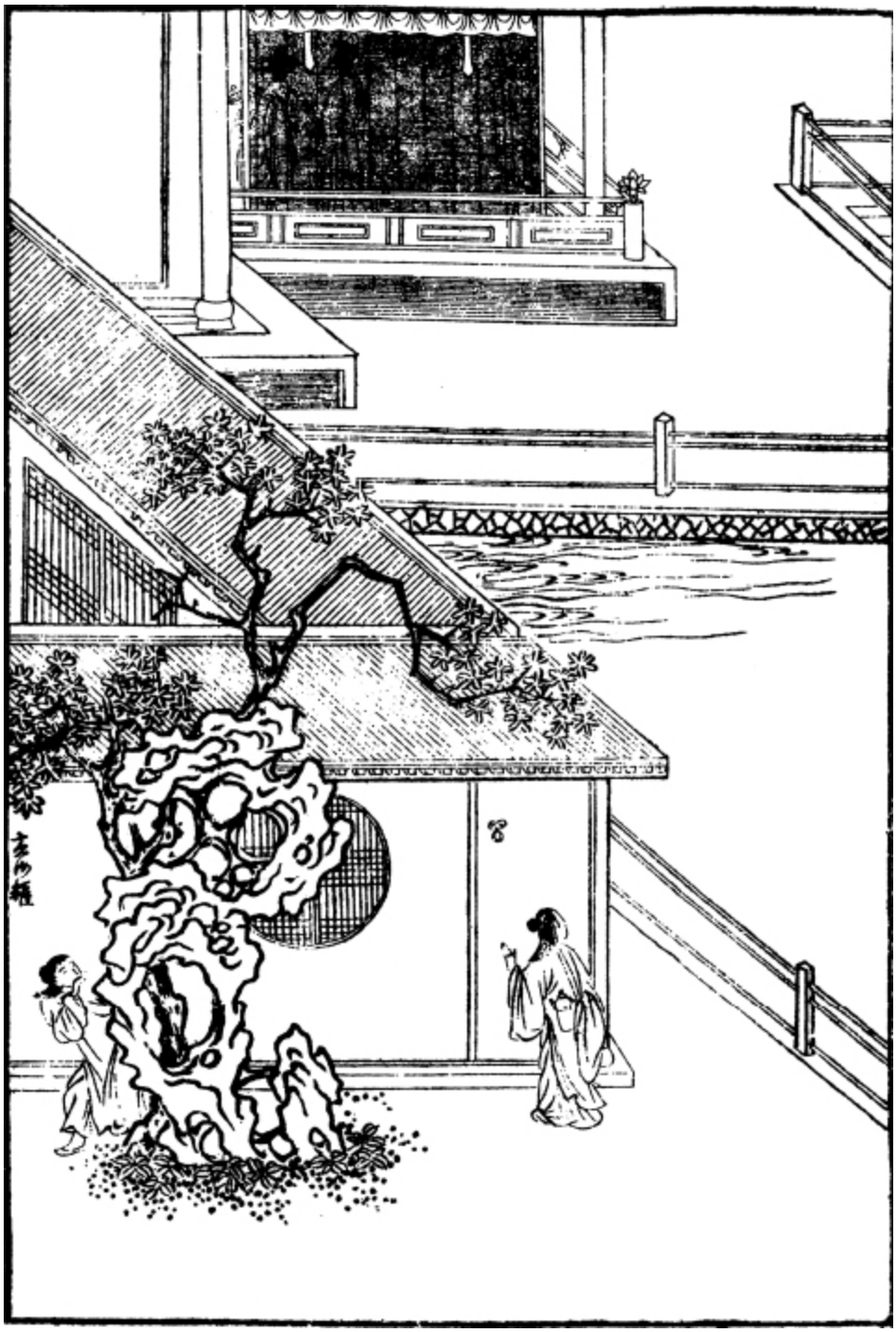
Strange as it may seem,

Ch'in-t'ung, who was tending to the wine up in the reception hall, happened to look out with a sardonic eye and catch sight of Yü-hsiao going into the studio, and then, after a while, coming out again. Assuming that Shu-t'ung was inside, without anyone's knowing it, he slipped into the room himself to see what was up.

Who could have anticipated that Shu-t'ung had gone out and not yet returned, but the flagon of warm wine and the fruit were still sitting there under the bed. Ch'in-t'ung hastily hid the fruit in his sleeve and then, concealing the flagon of wine behind his body, carried it straight to Li P'ing-erh's quarters. Ying-ch'un and her mistress were both in the reception hall and had not yet come back from the party. Only the wet nurse, Ju-i, and Hsiu-ch'un were in the room looking after Kuan-ko.

"Where is Elder Sister?" Ch'in-t'ung asked as soon as he came in the door.

"She's up in the reception hall," replied Hsiu-ch'un, "pouring wine for the mistress. Why do you ask?"



Ch’in-t’ung Conceals a Flagon after Spying on Yü-hsiao

“I’ve got hold of something good that I want her to keep for me,” said Ch’in-t’ung.

“What is it?” asked Hsiu-ch’un, but he refused to produce it.

As they were talking, Ying-ch'un came in from the reception hall, carrying a plate of roast goose and a saucerful of steamed corn flour pastries with rose-flavored stuffings for the wet nurse to eat.

When she caught sight of Ch'in-t'ung, she said, "You lousy jailbird! What are you laughing at here instead of being up in the reception hall tending to the wine?"

Only then did Ch'in-t'ung pull the flagon out from underneath his clothes, and say, "Sister Ying-ch'un, keep this for me."

"This is one of the flagons used for pouring wine in the reception hall," said Ying-ch'un. "Why have you bothered to bring it here for no reason at all?"

"Sister," said Ch'in-t'ung, "don't you worry about that. This is a case of Yü-hsiao from the master suite:

Playing at sevens and eights,

with that page boy Shu-t'ung. She purloined this flagon of wine, along with a tangerine and some pears, and brought them to the studio for him to enjoy. When I saw that no one was looking, I lifted them off him for myself. You just keep them good and safe for me. No matter who comes looking for them, if you don't trot them out, I'll have picked up something for nothing."

Thereupon he pulled out the pears and the tangerine for Ying-ch'un to see and said, "This is perfect for me, since, after I finish tending to the wine, it's my turn to spend the night at the house on Lion Street."

"In a little while," said Ying-ch'un, "if they turn the place upside down looking for the flagon, you'll take responsibility for it, I suppose?"

"After all, I'm not the one that stole their flagon," said Ch'in-t'ung. "It's true for everyone that while:

Those actually involved may be disturbed,
Those removed from the scene are relaxed.
What's it got to do with me?"

When he had finished speaking, he went nonchalantly off without more ado. Ying-ch'un put the flagon out of sight on a table in the inner room, but no more of this.

That evening, when the party broke up, the utensils were checked, and a flagon was found to be missing. Yü-hsiao went to the studio to look for it but came up empty-handed, for it was nowhere to be found.

When she asked Shu-t'ung about it, he said, "I was out on an errand and don't know anything about it."

Yü-hsiao then proceeded to panic and tried her best to blame it all on Hsiao-yü.

"You must have been screwed silly, you whore!" Hsiao-yü cursed at her. "I was in the rear compound seeing to the tea, while you were holding the flagon in order to pour wine for Mother at the party. And now that the flagon has disappeared, you try to blame it on me."

A thorough search was conducted, but it did not turn up.

After some time, Li P'ing-erh returned to her quarters, where Ying-ch'un reported, thus and so, to her, "Ch'in-t'ung brought one in here and asked me to keep it safe for him."

"That jailbird!" Li P'ing-erh exclaimed. "What did he bring that flagon of theirs in here for? In the rear compound, all on account of this flagon, the place is really being turned upside down. Yü-hsiao is blaming it on Hsiao-yü. Hsiao-yü is blaming it on Yü-hsiao. That senior maidservant is so upset she's:

Swearing by the gods and uttering oaths,

while all she can do is cry. You'd better take it back there immediately. If there's any further delay, I promise you, it'll be you that ends up being blamed for it, you little whore!"

Only then did Ying-ch'un bring out the flagon and prepare to take it back to the rear compound.

Meanwhile, in the rear compound, Yü-hsiao and Hsiao-yü were still quarreling over the disappearance of the flagon, and the two of them carried their dispute to Yüeh-niang.

"You lousy little stinkers!" exclaimed Yüeh-niang. "What are you still presuming to make such a ruckus about? What were the two of you in charge of at the time the flagon disappeared?"

“I was in the reception hall helping Mother serve wine to the guests,” declared Yü-hsiao, “while she was in charge of the silver utensils. Now that it’s disappeared, she’s trying to blame it on me.”

“Mother’s senior sister-in-law wanted some tea,” protested Hsiao-yü, “so didn’t I go back to the rear compound to fetch it? Since it was you who were holding the flagon, how did it come to disappear? I dare say:

The hole in your bottom’s so big:
Your mind has dropped out,[28]

or something of the sort.”

“I fear there weren’t any unfamiliar people at the party today,” said Yüeh-niang, “so how could something just disappear like that? Let’s wait a bit and see if this flagon won’t turn up somewhere. If we wait until your master gets wind of it, and the flagon is still missing, I promise you there’ll be a beating for each of you.”

“If Father gives me a beating,” expostulated Yü-hsiao, “and I ever let that whore off the hook, I might as well quit.”

As they continued to wrangle, who should walk in from the outside but Hsi-men Ch’ing, who asked, “What’s all the ruckus about?”

Yüeh-niang told him about the disappearance of the flagon.

“Just take your time and look for it,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “What’s the point of making such a fuss about it, for no good reason?”

“If you lose a flagon like this every time you have a party,” said P’an Chin-lien, “and don’t make a fuss about it:

Even if you were as rich as Moneybags Wang;[29]
When the first sample of vinegar is not sour,
The whole batch will turn out to be insipid.”[30]

Gentle reader take note: These words of Chin-lien’s were intended to reflect satirically on the fact that though Li P’ing-erh was the first woman in the household to bear a child, something valuable had been lost on the occasion of its full-month celebration, which was an unlucky omen.

Hsi-men Ch'ing understood this clearly enough but did not utter a sound.

What should they see at this point but Ying-ch'un coming in to return the flagon.

"So the flagon is here after all!" exclaimed Yü-hsiao.

"Where did this flagon actually turn out to be?" Yüeh-niang asked Ying-ch'un.

Ying-ch'un explained all about it, saying, "Ch'in-t'ung brought it into my mistress's quarters from outside somewhere and asked me to keep it for him. I don't know where it came from."

Yüeh-niang then asked, "Where is that slave, Ch'in-t'ung, right now?"

"It's his turn today to spend the night in the house on Lion Street," said Tai-an.

Chin-lien, who was standing to one side, couldn't help snickering at this.

"Just what are you laughing at?" Hsi-men Ch'ing then demanded to know.

"Ch'in-t'ung is *her* servant, after all," said Chin-lien. "And he stashed the flagon in *her* quarters. He must have had some reason for wanting to conceal the whereabouts of the flagon. If it were up to me, I'd send a page boy after that slave right now and subject him to a real beating, in order to get to the bottom of this. Otherwise, those two maidservants will have been falsely accused. Truly, that would be to:

Let the guardian deity escape while
indicting the Buddha."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this, he became enraged, opened his eyes wide, looked directly at Chin-lien, and said, "From the way you put it, no doubt Sister Li was so enamored of this flagon that she appropriated it herself! Just let well enough alone, why don't you? What reason do you have to make such a fuss about it?"

Chin-lien's face turned crimson with embarrassment, and she said, "I certainly never meant to imply that Sister Li doesn't have enough money of her own."

When she had finished speaking, she withdrew to one side in a huff.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was then invited away by Ch'en Ching-chi, who came in, saying, "Eunuch Director Liu, the manager of the Imperial Brickyard, has sent someone to deliver a gift. You'd better go up front to see him."

Chin-lien, who was standing to one side with Meng Yü-lou, started to curse, saying, "You'll come to a bad end, you lousy ruffian, sorting people so differentially into:

Three classes and nine categories.[31]

The last few days, the way you've been carrying on, you'd think you could defy death itself. Ever since she gave birth to this seedling, you've been treating her just as though she'd produced the crown prince. But when you run into the rest of us, you're like the incarnation of a baleful deity and haven't so much as a good word to say for us. Whatever we do, you open wide those two cunt-hole eyes of yours and start yelling at us. Who doesn't know that Sister Li's got money? In the future, I suppose, when her page boys and maidservants have been allowed to get away with their fornication and thievery till they've screwed everyone in sight, you'll still refuse to crack down on them."

As she was speaking, they noticed that Hsi-men Ch'ing, after sitting a while longer, got up and went out to the front compound.

"Aren't you going, too?" Meng Yü-lou asked. "He's sure to be headed for your place."

"As he said himself," Chin-lien retorted, "it's more lively when there's a child in the place. The quarters of people like us, who don't have any children, are forlorn."

As they were speaking, what should they see but Ch'un-mei coming in from the outside.

"I told you he was headed for your place," said Meng Yü-lou, "and you wouldn't believe it. Now Ch'un-mei has come to fetch you."

She then called Ch'un-mei over to ask her.

“I’ve come to ask Yü-hsiao for my handkerchief,” said Ch’un-mei. “She borrowed my handkerchief to wear today.”

“Where is your father?” asked Yü-lou.

“Father has gone to the Sixth Lady’s place,” Ch’un-mei replied.

When Chin-lien heard this, it was just as though a torch had been applied to her heart, and she started to curse, saying, “That lousy ruffian! In the future:

For a thousand years or all eternity,

I’d rather see him break his leg than try to come into my room. If he so much as sets foot on the threshold, that incorrigible jailbird, may he break his anklebone!”

“Sister Six,” said Yü-lou, “why are you denouncing him so venomously today?”

“That’s not it at all,” said Chin-lien. “It’s just that that lousy three-inch good-for-nothing of a ruffian has a:

Rat-stomach chicken-gut,[32]

heart with a capacity of no more than three inches. We’re all your wives after all. Only because she’s produced this piddling bladder’s spawn of hers, do you mean to say you’re going to carry on like this? What do you mean by:

Raising one person up, and
Putting another down,[33]

only to:

Trample them into the mud?”[34]

Truly:

Whenever a great wind blows down
the phoenix tree,
There are sure to be bystanders
to comment on it.[35]

Chin-lien continued to make a show of her temper. But no more of this.

To resume our story, when Hsi-men Ch’ing went out to the front compound, he found that Eunuch Director Hsüeh had sent a servant to deliver a jar of wine from the imperial palace, a sheep, two bolts

of satin brocade, a tray of sweetmeats in the shape of birthday peaches, a tray of birthday noodles, and four rare delicacies; in the first place, to wish him a happy birthday; and in the second place, to offer his congratulations. Hsi-men Ch'ing gave the messenger a generous tip and sent him on his way.

When he returned to the rear compound, Li Kuei-chieh and Wu Yin-erh were preparing to take their leave and go home.

"The two of you ought to stay over another day," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Tomorrow, the twenty-eighth, I've invited His Honor Chou Hsiu of the Regional Military Command, His Honor Hsia Yen-ling of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, His Honor Ching Chung, the military director-in-chief, Eunuch Director Hsüeh, the supervisor of the imperial estates, and Eunuch Director Liu, the manager of the Imperial Brickyard, to a birthday party. There will be a troupe of tumblers and actors from the licensed quarter, so all the two of you will have to do is serve the wine."

"If you're going to keep us here," said Kuei-chieh, "I'd better send someone home to let Mother know, so she'll be less inclined to worry."

Thereupon, the sedan chairs of the two of them were sent on their way. But no more of this.

The next day, Hsi-men Ch'ing had the great reception hall prepared by:

Arraying brocaded screens, and
Spreading out silken tablecloths,

for the party for official guests, the invitations to which had already been issued in advance. Because, the previous day, he had met Eunuch Director Liu, the manager of the Imperial Brickyard, while he was being entertained at the imperial estates, and that dignitary had joined with Eunuch Director Hsüeh in sending him gifts for the occasion, Hsi-men Ch'ing had also sent an invitation to him. He had also invited Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta to help keep his guests company. By lunchtime, having dressed themselves to befit the occasion, the two of them had already arrived, and Hsi-men Ch'ing

had ushered them into the summerhouse, where they were served tea.

“Brother,” Ying Po-chüeh then asked, “what particular guests have you invited to the party today?”

“There are the two Eunuch Directors, Liu and Hsüeh,” Hsi-men Ch’ing replied, “His Honor Chou Hsiu of the Regional Military Command, Military Director-in-chief Ching Chung, my colleague Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, Militia Commander Chang Kuan, Battalion Commander Fan Hsün of the Ch’ing-ho Guard, and my brothers-in-law, Wu K’ai and Wu the Second. My old neighbor, Ch’iao Hung, just sent someone over today to say that he couldn’t make it. Together with the two of you, that’s all the guests there are.”

No sooner had he finished speaking than Wu K’ai and Wu the Second arrived, bowed in greeting, and sat down with them. The attendants set up a table and served something to eat.

When they had finished eating, Ying Po-chüeh then asked, “At the full-month celebration yesterday, was your son brought out and shown to the company?”

“The assembled female guests did want to see him,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “but my wife said not to bring him out lest he catch a cold. His wet nurse said it didn’t matter. So she told the wet nurse to wrap him in a quilt and bring him out to the master suite so everyone could have a glimpse of him in honor of the day, after which she took him back to his mother’s room.”

“Sister-in-law also invited my wife that day,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “and she wanted very much to come. But in the midst of all the goings on, that old ailment of hers broke out again, and she was unable to get up from her k’ang. She was as upset as could be about it. Right now, before the other guests have come, why don’t you say the word and have your son brought out so we can have a look at him?”

Hsi-men Ch’ing then gave the directions, “Have Kuan-ko carefully brought out from the rear compound, but don’t do anything to frighten him. Tell your mistress that my elder brother-in-law and

second brother-in-law are here, along with Ying the Second and Mr. Hsieh, who would like to take a look at him."

Yüeh-niang told the wet nurse, Ju-i, to wrap him tightly in a little red satin quilt and take him as far as the postern gate leading to the summerhouse, where she could turn him over to Tai-an to carry the rest of the way.

The company opened their eyes wide and took a good look at him. Kuan-ko was wearing an undershirt of scarlet silk:

His face was white and his lips were red,

and he had quite an affluent appearance. Everyone sang his praises and paid him exaggerated compliments without end.

Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta each pulled out of his sleeve a satin brocade waistband with a small silver pendant attached, but Po-chüeh also presented a skein of variegated threads on which there were strung ten or more "longevity coins."

Turning these gifts over to Tai-an, Ying Po-chüeh said, "See that you carry him carefully back to his room. Don't do anything to frighten the baby."

He then continued by saying, "His features are regular. He's the natural-born embryo of someone fated to wear the silk hat of an official."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was greatly delighted, bowed, and thanked the two of them for their generous presents.

"Don't embarrass us, Brother," said Ying Po-chüeh. "These are no more than tokens of our esteem."

As they were speaking, it was suddenly announced that Eunuch Director Liu and Eunuch Director Hsüeh had arrived. Hsi-men Ch'ing hastened to don his formal clothes and went out to the ceremonial gate that led into the second courtyard to greet them. The two eunuchs arrived riding in sedan chairs borne by four bearers each, wearing python robes on which the body of the python extended around their shoulders,[36] and escorted by a contingent of soldiers with tasseled spears who shouted to clear the way.

Hsi-men Ch'ing first ushered them into the great reception hall, where he paid his respects, ran through the customary social amenities, and saw that they were served with tea.

After that, in no time at all, Commandant Chou Hsiu, Military Director-in-chief Ching Chung, Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, and the other military officials, dressed in clothing of figured brocade, escorted by soldiers holding rattan rods and large flabella who shouted to clear the way, and accompanied by their subordinates, all arrived at the front gate. The whole area was rendered black by the number of their servitors, while inside:

Drums and music resound to the heavens,[37]
Pipes and flutes are alternately heard.

As they were about to take their seats preparatory to the serving of the wine, they were introduced to the two eunuchs, Liu and Hsüeh. There were twelve tables arranged along the upper end of the hall. On all of them:

Valances are fastened with brocade ribbons,
Blossoms are displayed in golden vases.

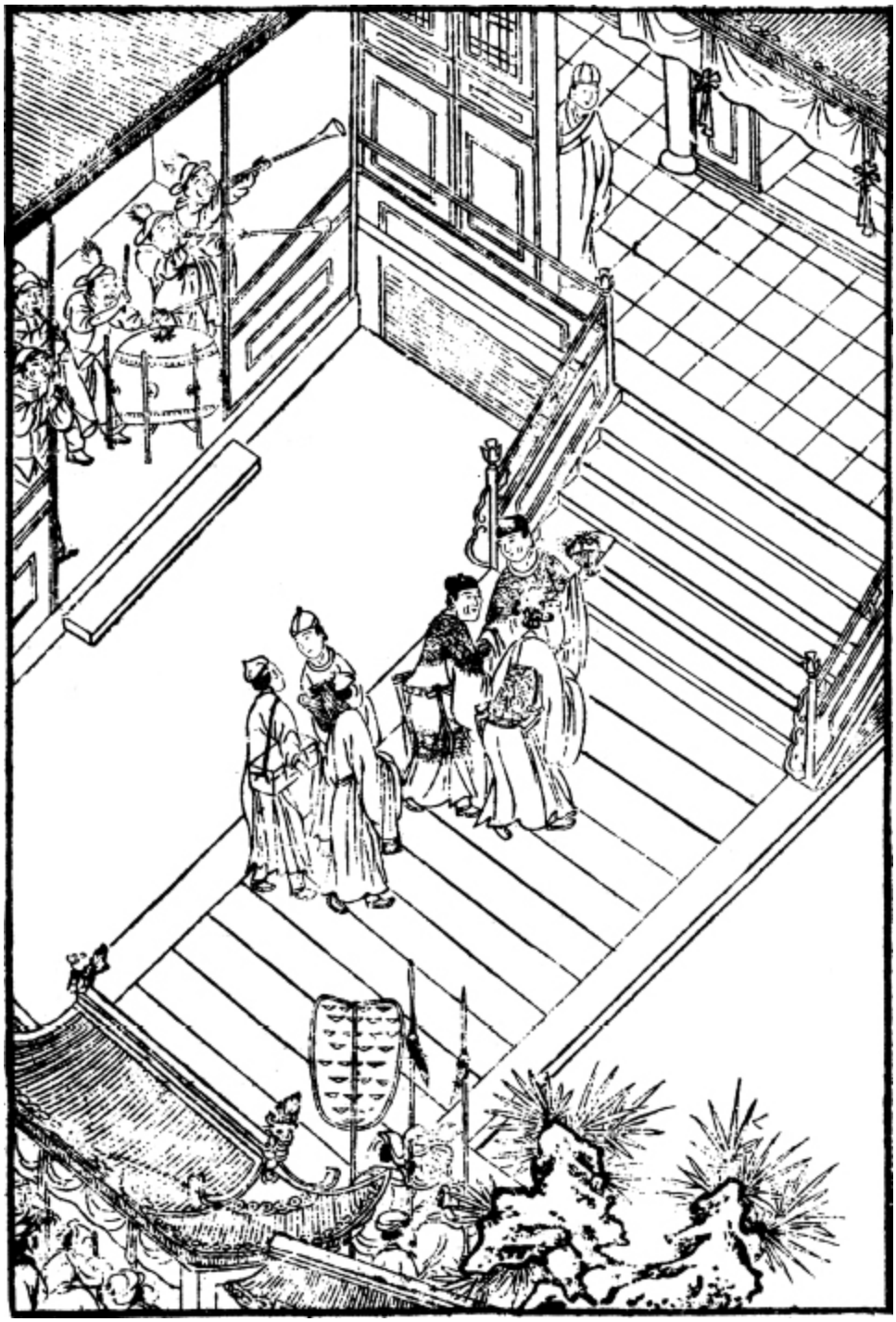
On each table were arrayed:

Cone-shaped piles of fruit and ingot-shaped cakes.

On the floor were spread:

Brocade carpets and embroidered rugs.

Hsi-men Ch'ing started off by urging his guests, with flagon in hand, to take their seats, but the two eunuchs, Liu and Hsüeh, repeatedly declined to take the seats of honor, saying, "What about these other distinguished gentlemen?"



Hsi-men Ch’ing Holds a Feast and Drinks Celebratory Wine

“The two senior eunuch directors,” said Commandant Chou:
“Are exalted in both age and virtue.
As the saying goes:

Those who have served as palace eunuchs for three years,
Take precedence over princes and dukes.

Of course they are entitled to the seats of honor.

What need is there for further discussion?"

After they had dickered politely for a while, Eunuch Director Hsüeh said, "Brother Liu, since the distinguished gentlemen are unwilling to precede us, we are making things difficult for our host. Let's take our seats and be done with it."

Thereupon, after bowing all the way around to salute the company, first Eunuch Liu on the left and then Eunuch Hsüeh on the right, having first had handkerchiefs placed on their seats, and accompanied by two page boys to fan them, finally took their places. Only after that did Commandant Chou, Military Director-in-chief Ching, and the rest do likewise.

Before long, from beneath the steps, they heard:

The strains of a classic melody,[38]

as the musicians began to play. What were the revels like that day? Behold:

Dainties were prepared of the rarest kind,
Fruits were provided just in season.

Before long:

Five rounds of wine had been consumed, and
Three courses of soup had been served.

The chef then came out and carved the minor entree of roast goose, after which Eunuch Liu, occupying as he did the seat of honor, rewarded him with five mace of silver.

The file leader from the Music Office then knelt down and proffered him a scarlet paper, accordion-bound album listing the program of pieces they were prepared to perform, after which, in the courtyard below the steps, the actors put on a comic farce of the genre known as hsiao-lo yüan-pen.[39]

First the *wai* (*supernumerary male role*), playing the Adjutant, comes on and recites the opening verse:

wai:

When laws are just Heaven's attitude is favorable;
When officials are honest the populace is content.
When the wife is worthy the husband's mishaps are few;
When children are filial the father's mind is relieved.[40]

It's not as though I were anyone else. I'm the Adjutant of this troupe, with many a star performer among the strolling players at my disposal. Yesterday in the marketplace I bought a standing screen on which there was inscribed a poem about the Prince of T'eng's Pavilion.[41] I asked someone about it, and he said that it was composed by Wang Po[42] of the Tang dynasty, who won success in the Palace Examination, though he was not quite three feet tall.[43] He also said that this person could:

Create a composition with a flourish of the brush;[44]

and that he was:

Extensively possessed of knowledge and erudition;

in short, a man of talent. Now I might as well call for the *fu-mo (supporting male role)* to go looking for him and invite him over so I can make his acquaintance; why not? Where's the *fu-mo?*

fu-mo:

From in the hall a single call;
Below the steps a hundred yeps.[45]

At your service, Adjutant. What is your command?"

wai:

Yesterday I observed that the poem about the Prince of T'eng's Pavilion inscribed on that standing screen is very well written. I've heard that it was composed by Wang Po of the T'ang dynasty, who won success in the Palace Examination, though he was not quite three feet tall. Now here's a yardstick to measure him by. I want you to go looking for him immediately, and invite him over. If you are successful, I'll reward you with a mace of silver. If you are

unsuccessful, you'll get twenty lashes with a hempen rope. I'll beat you for certain and not let you off.

fu-mo:
I understand, (*mimes exiting*) This Adjutant is a fool! As for that Palace Graduate Wang Po, from the T'ang period to the present time is not less than a thousand years or more. Where would he have me go to look for him? All I can do is:

Come this way and go that way,

until I arrive at the gate of the Confucian Temple. In the distance, there, I see an erudite-looking scholar coming this way. What else can I do but ask him. "Sir, are you, by any chance, the Palace Graduate Wang Po who composed the poem about the Prince of T'eng's Pavilion and are not quite three feet tall?"

ching (*comic-villain role, playing a scholar; aside, laughing*):
The Palace Graduate Wang Po was a man of the T'ang dynasty. Where would one find him today? I'll just play him along and see what happens, (*addresses him*) Yes, I am the Palace Graduate Wang Po, and it was I who composed the poem about the Prince of T'eng's Pavilion. I'll recite a few lines from the preface to convince you.

The city of Nan-ch'ang in the old Yü-chang commandery,
Is now the metropolis of the new Hung-chou prefecture.
It accords celestially with the mansions I and Chen …[46]
The effulgence of its dragon swords shoots
up to the Herd Boy and the Dipper.[47]
Its men are superlative and its territory is numinous;
The worthiness of Hsü Chih induced Ch'en Fan
to lower his suspended cot.[48]

fu-mo:
The Adjutant gave me this yardstick and said he only wanted someone who is three feet tall, and if he should be off by so much as a finger's-width, not to invite him. With that body of yours, how could you ever pass muster?

ching:
That doesn't matter.

The Way is what man makes of it.[49]

Look over there. Another Palace Graduate Wang Po is coming this way. (*mimes adopting the posture of a dwarf*)

fu-mo:
I'll measure him with this yardstick.

ching:
I'll shrink myself a little further.

fu-mo: (*laughing*)
You'll pass muster, I guess.

ching:
There's just one thing. When I see this Adjutant of yours, be sure to remember; whatever happens, I've simply got to have a low stool to rest on. Now we:

Come this way and go that way,
until we arrive at the Adjutant's gate.

fu-mo: (*orders the* ching)
You wait outside.

ching:
I've simply got to have a low stool to rest on.

fu-mo: (goes inside to report to the Adjutant)

wai:
Have you been successful in inviting that Palace Graduate Wang Po?

fu-mo:
He's waiting outside the gate this very moment.

wai:

Tell him I'm waiting to meet him inside the ceremonial gate that leads into the second courtyard. I'll regale him with tea flavored with hazelnuts and pine seeds, sliced roast meat, and congee, (*they mime greeting each other*)

wai:
This really is none other than the Palace Graduate Wang Po.
Were one but to see your distinguished features,
Such good fortune would suffice for three lives.[50]
Pray accept my kowtow.

ching: (*miming consternation*)
Where is that low stool?

wai: (*continues*)
From ancient times until the present day,
Such good fortune is not easily met with.[51]
Though I have:
Heard of your name without having seen your face,
today I find:
Seeing your face is better than hearing your name.[52]
Allow me to kowtow again.

ching: (*miming consternation*)
Where is that low stool?

fu-mo: (*mimes running off stage*)

wai:
I have heard that you possess:
Broad erudition and an extensive memory,
and that:
Your brush engenders dragons and serpents.[53]
Truly, you must be a man of talent. Your servant is:
Like a thirsty person longing for drink;
Like a parched person longing for coolness.[54]

Allow me to kowtow to you twice more.

ching: (*urgently breaking in*)
Is your father well? Is your mother well? Are your elder and your younger sister, and the other members of your household all well?

wai:
They're all well.
ching:
Why you mother-fucking dog! If the members of your household, both high and low, are all in such good shape; (*straightening himself up*) I shouldn't have to stay bent out of shape any longer.
Truly: (*recites the closing verse*)

A hundred jewels adorn her girdle,
Pearls entwine her leather sleevelets.
A smile moves dimples near her eyes,
Dance done, brocade enwraps her head.[55]

Another round of wine was served at the feast, and the audience of officials all laughed. Eunuch Director Hsüeh was delighted. He called up the head of the troupe and rewarded him with a tael of silver, after which the man kowtowed to express his thanks.

Before long, Li Ming and Wu Hui, the two boy actors, came before them to play and sing. One of them accompanied himself on the psaltery and the other on the *p'i-p'a*.

Commandant Chou first raised his hand and deferred to the two eunuchs, saying, "The senior eunuch directors should condescend to instruct these two as to what song suites they should perform."

"You distinguished gentlemen go first," said Eunuch Liu.

"Senior Eunuch Directors," said Commandant Chou:

"It is a self-evident principle;[56]
There is no need for discussion."

Eunuch Director Liu then said, "Let the two boys perform the song suite that begins with the line:

Alas! This floating life of ours
is like a dream."[57]

"Senior Eunuch Director," said Commandant Chou, "That is a piece about the life of retirement and disillusion with the world. Today we are celebrating His Honor Hsi-men's happy event, and it is also his birthday. It wouldn't do to sing that."

Eunuch Director Liu tried again, asking, "Can you sing the song suite that begins with the lines:

Though I am not one of the eight ministers
entitled to wear the purple sash;
I command the denizens of the six palaces
with their golden hairpins.[58]

"That is from the tsa-chü drama *Ch'en Lin Pao chuang-ho* (Ch'en Lin carrying the dressing-case)," said Commandant Chou. "Today is a celebratory occasion. It wouldn't do to sing that."

"Have those two come up here," said Eunuch Director Hsüeh. "Let me tell them what to do. You know that set of songs to the tune 'Plucking the Cassia'[59] that begins with the line:

It seems that in this life the hardest thing
to bear is separation.[60]

Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling laughed out loud at this, saying, "Senior Eunuch Director, that piece is on the subject of separation. It's even more inappropriate for this occasion."

"Our responsibilities as eunuchs are such," said Eunuch Director Hsüeh, "that all we know how to do is to wait upon the pleasure of the Lord of Ten Thousand Years. We have no taste for the subtleties of lyrics or songs. Let them sing whatever they want."

Judicial Commissioner Hsia, after all, held a substantive appointment in the Imperial Insignia Guard and was able to rely on his status as an officer in the legal system, so, when one of the musicians came up, he instructed him, "You sing the song suite

entitled ‘Thirty Melodies.’[61] Today we are celebrating His Honor Hsi-men’s:

Appointment to office and augmented emolument.

And it is also his birthday. And, in addition he has had:

The joy of giving his son a jade scepter to play with.[62]

That is the appropriate suite to sing.”

“What is all this about:

The joy of giving his son a jade scepter to play with?”

Eunuch Director Hsüeh asked.

“My two senior eunuch directors,” said Commandant Chou. “Today is also the full-month celebration for the birth of His Honor Hsi-men’s young scion. We colleagues of his have all brought meager gifts in honor of the occasion.”

Eunuch Director Hsüeh started to say, “We,” and then, turning to Eunuch Director Liu, said, “Brother Liu, I guess we’ll have to make restitution by bringing our congratulatory gifts tomorrow.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing expressed his gratitude, saying, “The fact that your pupil has been able to sire a shoat or a whelp:

Is not worthy of congratulation.

There is really no need for the senior eunuch directors to go to so much trouble.”

When he had finished speaking, he summoned Tai-an and told him to call Wu Yin-erh and Li Kuei-chieh out from the rear compound to serve a round of wine at the feast. The two singing girls made themselves up and came outside, then:

Like sprigs of blossoms swaying in the breeze,

facing the company:

Neither correctly nor precisely,

Just as though inserting tapers in their holders,

they kowtowed four times. After which, they stood up, took flagons in hand, and respectfully offered a serving of wine to each person present. The two musicians then proceeded to sing a new set of song lyrics:

The sound of their singing is melodious;

truly possessing:

A timbre that lingers around the rafters.[63]

That evening the company was entertained:

First with singing and then with dancing,
Amid clinging brocade and clustering blossoms.[64]

The drinking continued until after the first watch of the night before Eunuch Director Hsüeh stood up and said, “Your pupils, in the first place, have already benefited excessively from your lavish hospitality; and in the second place, because it has been such an occasion for rejoicing, have been insensibly enticed into drinking too deeply, and disturbing you to the fullest possible extent. We beg to take our leave.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing replied, “In response to my:

Humble invitation for a cup of tea,
You have condescended to pay a visit,

thereby abruptly:

Enhancing the glory of my humble abode.[65]

I hope you will relax and stay a little longer,

In order to exhaust your remaining pleasure.”

All the guests then got up from their places and said, “Your pupils have put you to a great deal of trouble.

The effects of the drink are more than we can handle.”

Each of them then:

Bent his body to perform an obeisance,[66]

as an expression of gratitude. Hsi-men Ch’ing repeatedly urged them to stay, but to no avail. All he could do was to accompany them to the main gate, along with his eldest brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, and Wu the Second. There, as the strains of:

Drums and music resound to the heavens,

while on either side:

Lanterns and torches flare resplendently,[67]
With crowds of escorts in front and behind,[68]

setting up a shout to clear the way, they made their departure.

Truly, it is a case of:

When happy one dislikes the shortness of the day,[69]
Deliberately burning high candles to illuminate
the red makeup of the crab apples.[70]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 32

LI KUEI-CHIEH ADOPTS A MOTHER AND IS ACCEPTED AS A DAUGHTER; YING PO-CHÜEH CRACKS JOKES AND DANCES ATTENDANCE ON SUCCESS

As the saying goes, “Riches constitute the
foundation of distinction”;
When “wealth” is “flourishing” it begets “the official”
as everybody knows.
To get a leg up on the road to officialdom
one must rely on patronage;
Only by means of truckling to the powerful
can one hope for promotion.
Marriage alliances with factional malefactors
will make everyone fear you;
If one relies on the influence of the prominent
who will dare to defy you?
It were better to forgo the blaze of success
in favor of tranquility;
How can human effort hope to contend
with the decree of fate?[1]

THE STORY GOES that when the party for the group of officials broke up that day, Hsi-men Ch’ing urged his elder brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, Wu the Second, Ying Po-chüeh, and Hsieh Hsi-ta to stay a little longer.

He arranged for the musicians and other performers to be provided with wine and food and, when they had finished, instructed them, “You must come back again and do another stint tomorrow. I have invited the four principal officers from the district yamen to a party, so be sure that you are properly attired for the occasion. When it’s all over, I’ll compensate you for both days’ work at the same time.”

“We will, of course, do our best,” responded the musicians. “Tomorrow we’ll report for work in brand new regulation costumes.”

As soon as they had finished consuming their wine and food, they left.

After a while, Li Kuei-chieh and Wu Yin-erh came out with their hair done up in kerchiefs and said, with an ingratiating smile, “Father, we fear it’s getting late. Our sedan chairs have come for us. We’d better be off.”

“My children,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “you’re certainly having an easy time of it. The two old gentlemen are still here, but rather than offering to sing a song for our senior brother-in-law, you just want to take off, do you?”

“If you hadn’t spoken up,” said Li Kuei-chieh, “you might have been written off as a dog who couldn’t bark. We haven’t been home for two days now. Who knows how anxious Mother may be to see me?”

“What’s she so anxious to see?” said Ying Po-chüeh. “Have you pinched a jade yellow “imperial damson”[2] for her, or what?”

“That’s enough,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. Let the two of them go. After all, they’ve been exerting themselves for two days in a row. I’ll get Li Ming and Wu Hui to sing us a song.”

“Have you had anything to eat?” he then went on to ask.

“Just now, the First Lady gave us something to eat in the master suite,” said Li Kuei-chieh.

Thereupon, they both prostrated themselves and kowtowed as though inserting tapers in their holders.

“The two of you must come again day after tomorrow,’ Hsi-men Ch’ing instructed them, “and also engage another two singing girls on my behalf. It doesn’t matter who you get. Cheng Ai-hsiang would do, and Han Chin-ch’uan would do also. I’m throwing a party for my relatives and friends.”

“What a piece of luck for the little whores,” said Ying Po-chüeh. “If you have them engage the singing girls for you, they’ll collect the commission to spend on themselves.”

“You’re not a ‘cribber’[3] yourself,” exclaimed Li Kuei-chieh. “How do you come to know so much about it?”

After saying which, they departed, laughing as they went.

“Brother,” Ying Po-chüeh then went on to ask, “who are you going to invite the day after tomorrow?”

“That day,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing, “I plan to invite my old neighbor, Ch’iao Hung, my two senior brothers-in-law, Hua the Elder, Mr. Shen, the husband of my wife’s elder sister, and all the sworn brothers from our club. We’ll make a day of it.”

“It goes without saying,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “that we have imposed too much on you as it is. The day after tomorrow, the two of us ought to come early so we can help you out by serving as assistant hosts.”

“That would be only too kind of you,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

When they had finished speaking, Li Ming and Wu Hui came up with their instruments and sang a song suite for them. Only after that did elder brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, and the rest of the guests get up to go. Of the events of that evening there is no more to tell.

The next day, Hsi-men Ch’ing had invited the four principal officers from the district yamen to a party, and they sent gifts beforehand to congratulate him on having just sired a son. That day Eunuch Director Hsüeh arrived early, and Hsi-men Ch’ing invited him into the summerhouse and served him with tea.

Eunuch Director Hsüeh then asked, “Eunuch Liu hasn’t sent his gift yet, has he?”

“Eunuch Director Liu has already sent a gift,” Hsi-men Ch’ing replied.

After some time, Eunuch Hsüeh said, “Might I request that your son be brought out so that I can have a look at him and wish him a long life?”

Hsi-men Ch’ing was unable to refuse this request and could only instruct Tai-an, “Go back to the rear compound and tell them to have the baby brought out.”

Before long, the wet nurse brought Kuan-ko out as far as the postern gate leading into the garden, where she turned him over to Tai-an to carry the rest of the way.

When Eunuch Hsüeh saw the baby, all he could do was to sing his praises, exclaiming, “What a wonderful little brother!”

He then called out, “Where are my page boys?”

In no time at all, two servants clad in black produced a pair of square lacquer gift boxes decorated with inlaid gilt designs, containing a bolt of red government-quality shot silk, four gold-plated silver coins bearing the characters for:

Good fortune, long life, health, and tranquility,[4]

a toy clapper-drum[5] decorated with a varicolored, gold-flecked portrait of the God of Longevity, and two taels worth of silver trinkets in the shape of the “eight treasures.”

“I am but a poor eunuch,” he said, “with nothing fit to offer. I only hope your son will find these insignificant gifts amusing.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing bowed and thanked him, saying, “I am much indebted to Your Excellency for your consideration.”

When they had finished looking at the presents, Kuan-ko was carried back to his room. But no more of this.

Hsi-men Ch’ing kept him company as he drank his tea, after which an Eight Immortals table[6] was set out and refreshments provided in the form of twelve bowls of assorted appetizers and fresh new rice.

No sooner had they finished eating than the gatekeeper came in to announce that the four principal officers of the district yamen had arrived. Hsi-men Ch’ing hastily adjusted his attire and went out to the gate that led into the second courtyard to greet them. They were District Magistrate Li Ta-t’ien, Vice-Magistrate Ch’ien Ch’eng,

Assistant Magistrate Jen T'ing-kuei,[7] and Docket Officer Hsia Kung-chi.

Each of them first presented his calling card and then performed the rituals of greeting in the reception hall. Only after this did Eunuch Hsüeh come out to meet them. The assembled officials all insisted that Eunuch Hsüeh take the seat of honor. Among those present was the provincial graduate Shang Hsiao-t'ang, who also came out to greet them. After they had taken the seats appropriate for guests and host, a round of tea was served.

In a little while, from beneath the steps:

Drums and music begin to sound,
Pipes and voices rise in concert.

Wine was served, and someone from the Music Office presented the program, from which Eunuch Hsüeh picked the four scenes of the tsa-chü drama entitled *Han Hsiang-tzu sheng-hsien chi* (Han Hsiang-tzu induces Ch'en Pan-chieh to ascend to the realm of the immortals).[8] A number of ensemble dance pieces were also presented, performed with superb execution. Eunuch Hsüeh was delighted by this and called on his attendants for two strings of cash with which to reward the performers. We will say no more about how the group of officials continued their drinking until evening before the party broke up.

To resume our story, when Li Kuei-chieh arrived home, in recognition of the fact that Hsi-men Ch'ing had become a judicial commissioner, she and the old procuress:

Laid plans and hatched a scheme.

The next day, she bought a box of stuffed pastries, a set of pig's trotters, two roast ducks, two bottles of wine, and a pair of women's shoes, consigned the load of gifts to a servant to carry, and set out in a sedan chair, first thing in the morning, in order to make obeisance to Wu Yüeh-niang as her godmother, and get herself accepted as an adopted daughter.

When she came in, before doing anything else, she faced Yüeh-niang with an ingratiating smile and proceeded:

Just as though inserting a taper in its holder,

to perform:

Four brace makes eight kowtows.[9]

Only after that did she kowtow to her aunt and to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

This had the effect of so cozening Yüeh-niang that she was utterly delighted and said, "The other day we received a lavish present from your mother, and today you have put yourself to the trouble of buying all these gifts."

Kuei-chieh laughed, saying, "Mother says that since Father has now become an official, it's not like it used to be when he could frequent the licensed quarter all the time. I'd be more than willing to settle for the status of your adopted daughter, so we could come and go as relatives, and I could visit in your home."

This flustered Yüeh-niang to such an extent that she hastily told her to take off her outside clothes and sit down.



Li Kuei-chieh Adopts a Mother and Is Accepted as a Daughter

After her things had been put away, Yüeh-niang went on to ask Kuei-chieh, “What of Wu Yin-erh and those other two; how come they haven’t arrived yet?”

“I arranged everything with Wu Yin-erh yesterday,” replied Kuei-chieh. “I don’t know why she hasn’t come yet. The day before yesterday, Father instructed us to engage Cheng Ai-hsiang and Han Chin-ch’uan for him, and when I set out, their sedan chairs were already waiting at the door for them. They should be here any minute now.”

She had not yet finished speaking, when whom should they see but Wu Yin-erh and Cheng Ai-hsiang, along with another young painted face wearing a gown of scarlet silk, come in the door, carrying their garment bags. Before doing anything else, they faced Yüeh-niang and kowtowed to her:

Like sprigs of blossoms swaying in the breeze,
Sending the pendants of their embroidered sashes flying.

When Wu Yin-erh saw that Li Kuei-chieh had already taken off her outer clothing and was seated on the k’ang, she said, “A fine person you are, Kuei-chieh! Without waiting for the rest of us, you just came ahead by yourself.”

“I *was* waiting for you,” protested Kuei-chieh, “but when Mother saw that my sedan chair was at the door, she said, ‘I fear Yin-erh must have gone ahead. You’d better be on your way.’ Who could have anticipated that you’d get here even later?”

Yüeh-niang laughed, saying, “It’s not late. Take your seats and we can all have tea together.”

“And what is the name of this other girl?” she then went on to ask.

“She is Han Chin-ch’uan’s younger sister, Yü-ch’uan,” Wu Yin-erh replied.

Before long, Hsiao-yü brought in a table and set out eight saucers of assorted delicacies and two of sweetmeats for the refreshment of the four singing girls. Li Kuei-chieh, making a show of her status as Yüeh-niang’s adopted daughter, sat on Yüeh-niang’s k’ang and joined Yü-hsiao in cracking nuts and putting the kernels into serving boxes, while Wu Yin-erh, Cheng Ai-hsiang, and Han Yü-ch’uan sat below on a row of stools to one side.

Li Kuei-chieh forthwith plucked up her spirits, calling out, on one occasion, “Sister Yü-hsiao, might I trouble you, if there is any tea, to pour a cup for me?” and, on another occasion, “Sister Hsiao-yü, if there’s any water handy, bring some here so I can rinse these hands of mine.”

Hsiao-yü actually did dip up a pewter basinful of water for her to rinse her hands in. Wu Yin-erh and the others looked on with wide-open eyes but did not dare say anything.

Li Kuei-chieh then said, “Yin-erh, why don’t the three of you get out your instruments and entertain Mother with a song. I’ve sung for her already.”

Wu Yüeh-niang and Li Chiao-erh were sitting right across from her, so when Wu Yin-erh heard these words of Kuei-chieh’s she had no alternative but to do as she was told.

Thereupon, with Cheng Ai-hsiang playing the psaltery, Wu Yin-erh playing the *p’i-p’a*, and Han Yü-ch’uan singing along with them, they sang the song suite beginning with the tune “Eight Beats of a Kan-chou Song,” the first line of which is:

Concealed amid clusters of turquoise hair ornaments.[10]

In no time at all, they finished singing and put down their musical instruments, after which Wu Yin-erh started off by asking Yüeh-niang, “Which official guests has Father invited to the party today?”

“The guests your father has invited today are all relatives and friends,” Yüeh-niang replied.

“Are those two eunuchs not going to be here today?” asked Kuei-chieh.

“Eunuch Hsüeh was the only one who showed up yesterday,” said Yüeh-niang. “The one named Liu didn’t come.”

“Eunuch Liu is all right,” said Kuei-chieh, “but that Eunuch Hsüeh is given to mischief. He pinches you until you think you’ll go out of your mind.”

“After all, he’s only a eunuch,” said Yüeh-niang, “so what does it matter? You might as well let him have a little fun.”

“That’s a fine thing to say,” complained Kuei-chieh. “He’s enough to drive a person crazy.”

As they were talking, who should they see but Tai-an, who came in to pick up the serving boxes of nuts they had been preparing.

When he saw the four singing girls sitting in the room, he said, “Half the guests have already arrived, and they’re just about to take their seats. Hadn’t you better get yourselves together and go up to the reception hall?”

Yüeh-niang then asked, “Who all have arrived up front?”

“Old Mr. Ch’iao, Hua the Elder, Wu the Elder, Wu the Second, and Mr. Hsieh have all been here for some time,” reported Tai-an.

“Are that beggar, Ying the Second, and Pockmarked Chu going to be here today?” asked Kuei-chieh.

“Of the ten members of the club,” said Tai-an, “not one of them will be absent today. Ying the Second showed up at 8:00 A.M. and Father sent him off on an errand, but he said he’d be right back.”

“Ai-ya!” exclaimed Kuei-chieh. “Every time it’s those same chunks of knife-bait. Who knows how long they’ll keep on pestering us? I won’t go out there today. I’d rather stay here in her room and sing for Mother’s benefit.”

“You’re certainly bent on having an easy time of it,” said Tai-an as he picked up the boxes of nuts and went his way.

“Mother, you just don’t know how it is,” said Kuei-chieh. “That Pockmarked Chu, when he’s at a party, keeps his two lips going so incessantly that all you can hear is the sound of his talking. No matter how people take him to task for it, he doesn’t pay any attention. He and that Blabbermouth Sun are nothing but a pair of slobber-pusses.”

“That Pockmarked Chu,” said Cheng Ai-hsiang, “the one who constantly runs around with Ying the Second, showed up at our place the other day with Little Chang the Second, who produced ten taels of silver and wanted to engage my younger sister Ai-yüeh. Mother told him, ‘She has just been deflowered by a Southerner, not

more than a month ago, and the “Southerner has not yet left town, so how can I agree to retain you as her customer?’ She explained all this to him, but he repeatedly refused to accept it and made such a nuisance of himself that in her botheration she locked herself in and refused to come out and see him.

“That Little Chang the Second has really got money to burn. He rides around on a large white horse with four or five page boys to accompany him. He just sat there in our reception hall that day and refused to budge, which got Pockmarked Chu so flustered that he knelt down in the courtyard, so his torso looked as though it were sticking out of the ground like a post, and begged us, saying ‘Whatever happens, ask your mother to come out and accept this money of his. If Sister Ai-yüeh will do no more than come out to see him and serve him a cup of tea, we’ll leave.’ It really made us laugh. He was just like someone abasing himself to plead for flood relief, the slobber-pussed good-for-nothing!”

“I thought Little Chang the Second was keeping Tung the Cat,” said Wu Yin-erh.

“Because, in the course of his devotions, he burnt incense in two places on her tiger’s mouth,”[11] said Cheng Ai-hsiang, “their affair has been ‘a-nail-eighted’[12] for some time. Right now they’re running loose.”

Then, turning to Kuei-chieh, she said, “The other day while attending a wake on a country estate outside the gate, I ran into Chou Hsiao-erh, who asked me to give you his best. He said that the day before yesterday he went to your place with Nieh Yüeh, but you weren’t at home.”

Kuei-chieh tipped her a wink, saying, “I was here at Father’s place that day. It’s my elder sister, Kuei-ch’ing, that he’s interested in.”

“If you haven’t had anything to do with Chang[13] in the past,” said Cheng Ai-hsiang, “why are you carrying on with him now?”

“Why that fucking Liu the Ninth!”[14] Kuei-chieh exclaimed. “As though I’d take him as a customer! What sort of a good-for-nothing is that? He’d only have given me the creeps. After he got out of that

affair he was implicated in, people I ran into said that he was angry at me for refusing to see him. Mother told him, ‘If you were to stick to our place, we might be willing to lay out a little something to entertain you; what would it matter? But if you insist on carrying on with someone else, we’re not stupid enough to countenance you any further.’ Truly:

If you put on fake crystals to contemplate
that southern exposure;
It’ll only look more repulsive.”[15]

Everyone laughed at what was being said, but Yüeh-niang, sitting on her k’ang listening to the conversation, protested, “You’ve been talking all this while, and I haven’t understood a word of it. I don’t know what sort of lingo you’re talking.”

Let us put this aside for a moment and say no more about it. To resume our story, in the front compound all of the guests had arrived, and Hsi-men Ch’ing, in formal attire, supervised the serving of the wine. The company insisted that Ch’iao Hung should take precedence, and he was the first to offer a toast to Hsi-men Ch’ing. Just at this juncture, the three singing girls came out from the rear compound. Behold:

On their heads:

Pearl-decked caps are all aquiver;

From their bodies:

The scent of orchid and musk reeks.

No sooner did Ying Po-chüeh spot them than he started to joke, saying, “Where did these three sweethearts of yours come from? Stop them. Don’t let them come in.”

“Mr. Host,” he then went on to ask, “why didn’t Li Kuei-chieh come out with the rest of them?”

“I have no idea,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing.

To start off with, Cheng Ai-hsiang played the psaltery, Wu Yin-erh the *p’i-p’a,* and Han Yu-ch’uan the mandola as they:

Opened their ruby lips,
Exposed their white teeth,

and sang the set of songs to the tune “The Water Nymphs,” beginning with the one the first line of which is:

With his tiger-head tally minted out of
horse-hoof gold.[16]

After some time had elapsed and everyone had been provided with wine, Ch’iao Hung took the seat of honor, followed in order of precedence by Wu K’ai, Wu the Second, Hua the Elder, Brother-in-law Shen, Sponger Ying, Tagalong Hsieh, Blabbermouth Sun, Sticky Chu, Welsher Yün, Cadger Ch’ang, Scrounger Pai, Manager Fu, and Scurry-about Pen, making a party of fourteen. There were eight tables in all, and Hsi-men Ch’ing presided as host at the lower end of the seating arrangement.

Words are inadequate to describe the scene:

The sound of their singing is melodious,
The style of their dancing is fastidious;
The wine flows as copiously as waves,
The viands are piled as high as hills.[17]

When they reached the point at which:

Several rounds of wine had been consumed, and
Three suites of songs had been performed,

Ying Po-chüeh began to hold forth, saying, “Mr. host, there’s no need to have them sing anymore. Whether you look at it this way or that, one way or the other, it’s always the same couple of suites, as monotonous as a dog scratching at the door. Who wants to listen to it? It would be better to get your servant to set another three places for them and let them serve the company with wine rather than continuing to sing.”

“Just let them show their respects to the guest of honor and the rest of the company with a couple more suites of songs,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “You dog! You’re always ready to:

Disturb the feast and break up the party.”[18]

“Beggar Ying,” said Cheng Ai-hsiang, “you’re the type who:

Lets off fireworks behind the gate:

Unable to wait for evening."[19]

Ying Po-chüeh got up from his place and cursed, saying, "You crazy little whore! I care about as much whether it's evening or not as your mother's cunt!"

Then, instructing Tai-an, "Come over here, and take their instruments away from them," he took one of them by each hand and forcibly dragged them up to where the company was seated and told them to serve the wine.

"You crazy good-for-nothing!" protested Cheng Ai-hsiang. "You're dragging me so fast:

My limbs can hardly touch the ground."[20]

"You little whore!" said Ying Po-chüeh. "The truth of the matter is that:

Time is running out.
At any moment:

The 'blue-bladed horse' may 'come.'[21]
Serve the wine. I can't hold out any longer."

"What do you mean by the 'blue-bladed horse'?" asked Hsieh Hsi-ta.

"When you wind up with a 'shiver like a cold crow,' " said Ying Po-chüeh, "the 'blue-bladed horse' always 'comes.' "

Everyone laughed at this sally.

Thereupon, Wu Yin-erh served Ch'iao Hung, Cheng Ai-hsiang served Wu K'ai, Han Yü-ch'uan served Wu the Second, and they then proceeded to work their way, one at a time, down the two sides of the seating arrangement.

When Wu Yin-erh finally arrived in front of Ying Po-chüeh, he asked her, "Why didn't Li Kuei-chieh come out with the rest of you?"

"Master Two," said Wu Yin-erh, "you mean you still don't know about it? Li Kuei-chieh has now been acknowledged by the First Lady as her adopted daughter. Whatever I tell you about this, keep it to yourself. Talk about premeditated schemes! Day before yesterday, when the party broke up here at Father's place, we all

went home together and agreed that we would meet early this morning in order to come over here together. I got myself all ready at my place and was just waiting for her, while who could have known that, all the time, she had intended to buy presents in advance and set out ahead of me, leaving me to wait for her all this time.

"I sent a maidservant to your place to see what was up, and she reported that you had already left, which earned me a real scolding from Mother. So I hastened, along with the other two, to catch up with you. If you were going to get yourself acknowledged as an adopted daughter by Father and Mother, what difference would it have made to tell me about it? It's not as though I wanted to take your place or anything like that, so you would feel justified in doing things behind my back.

"No wonder she was sitting there on the First Lady's k'ang just now, making a show of the fact that she was Mother's adopted daughter, cracking nuts and putting the kernels into serving boxes:

Picking up this and then picking up that,
and spurning the rest of us under her feet.

"I hadn't known about it until the Sixth Lady surreptitiously told me, just now, in the rear compound. She made a pair of shoes for the First Lady, bought a box of stuffed pastries, two ducks, a set of pig's trotters, and two bottles of wine, and came here in a sedan chair before any of the rest of us."

She gave a full account of the affair, from beginning to end.

When Ying Po-chüeh had heard her out, he said, "If she's here today but won't come out to entertain us, it doesn't matter; but I'd really like to show that lousy little whore a thing or two. Let me tell you, she must have planned all this together with the madam of her place. On seeing that His Honor has become an official, and moreover that he holds a judicial appointment, in the first place, they were afraid of his power and influence; and, in the second place, they feared that he would visit the licensed quarter less often; so they took advantage of this scheme to get her acknowledged as

an adopted daughter to ensure that their relationship would continue and not be broken off. Have I got it right, or not?

"I'll tell you what to do. She got the First Lady to accept her as an adopted daughter. Now you, too, should buy some presents and get the Sixth Lady to acknowledge you as an adopted daughter. After all, you and she have both been:

Traveling companions on the same road,
along with the late Hua Tzu-hsü.

Everyone must do the best he can for himself.[22]

Is what I say right, or not? There's no reason for you to get upset with her."

"What you say is right," responded Wu Yin-erh. "When I get home, I'll speak to Mother about it."

When she had finished speaking, she served him with wine and then moved on.

The next person to serve him with wine was Han Yü-ch'uan.

"Sister Han," said Ying Po-chüeh, "I'm putting you to a lot of trouble. Don't bother to perform a proper obeisance. What's your elder sister up to at home these days?"

"Someone is maintaining my elder sister at home," replied Han Yü-ch'uan. "She hasn't come out to sing for some time now."

"I remember visiting your place in the fifth month last," said Ying Po-chüeh, "and not seeing anything of your sister."

"On that occasion," said Han Yü-ch'uan, "why didn't you stick around a little longer, instead of running off so soon?"

"I would have stayed longer that day," said Ying Po-chüeh, "but there were two people there that I don't get along with, and your father here also wanted me to join him, so I left early."

When Han Yü-ch'uan saw that he had drunk his cup of wine, she poured out another cup.

"That's enough," said Ying Po-chüeh. "Take it easy. I can't drink any more."

"Master Two," said Han Yü-ch'uan, "take your time about it, and when you're finished I'll sing a song for you."

“Sister mine,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “whoever told you? That’s the surest way to my heart. As the saying goes:

You don’t raise a child in the hope it will
shit gold and piss silver;
All you can hope for is that it will
respond empathetically to you.

You’re a true denizen of the Verdant Spring Bordello.[23] In the future, you needn’t worry about not having anything to eat. You’re certainly superior to that lousy little splay-legged whore from the Cheng place. Slippery as she is, she never consents to sing.”

“Beggar Ying the Second,” exclaimed Cheng Ai-hsiang, “you’re delirious again. What a thing to say!

“You dog!” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “Just a while ago, you were objecting to their singing, and now you’re giving her a hard time about it.”

“That was a while ago,” responded Ying Po-chüeh. “Now that they’ve served the wine, should we not have a song? As long as I’ve got three mace of silver to my name, I can afford to:

Make a ghost at the millstone,[24]

out of that little whore.”

Han Yü-ch’uan had no alternative but to pick up her *p’i-p’a* and sing four songs for the amusement of the company.

Ying Po-chüeh then enquired of Hsi-men Ch’ing, “How come you didn’t have Li Kuei-chieh come out to entertain us today?”

“She’s not here today,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“I heard her singing, a while ago, in the rear compound,” said Ying po-chüeh, “and now you’re telling lies on her behalf.”

Then, turning to Tai-an, he said, “Whatever happens, go into the rear compound and tell her to come out, and be quick about it.”

Tai-an refused to budge, saying, “Master Two, you haven’t heard right. It’s the blind professional singer Big Sister Yü that’s singing for the ladies.”

“You lousy little oily mouth!” exclaimed Ying Po-chüeh, “do you think you can fool me? Wait till I go back there myself to fetch her.”

Sticky Chu then said to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "Brother, it doesn't really matter, but why not just ask Li Kuei-chieh to come out and serve a round of drinks to your distinguished relatives? If she doesn't sing, it doesn't matter. I know that she is here for personal reasons today."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was unable to withstand the pestering of his cronies and felt compelled to send Tai-an back to the rear compound and ask Li Kuei-chieh to come and join them.

Li Kuei-chieh was in the master suite, playing her *p'i-p'a* and singing for the entertainment of Wu K'ai's wife, Aunt Yang, Old Mrs. P'an, and company.

When she saw Tai-an come in to call for her, she asked, "Who sent you here?"

"Father told me to come," replied Tai-an, "and ask you to go out to the reception hall and serve a round of drinks."

"Mother," said Li Kuei-chieh, "Father's not making any sense. I said, just now, that I wasn't going to go out, and now he's calling for me anyway."

"It was only because Father was unable to withstand the pestering of the company," said Tai-an, "that he sent me back here for you."

"It doesn't matter," said Yüeh-niang. Just go out, serve a round of drinks, and come back as quickly as you can, that's all."

"Was it really Father who sent for me?" Kuei-chieh again asked Tai-an. "If it was, then I'll go. But if it was Beggar Ying the Second, I wouldn't care if he called me for an age, I'd never go."

Thereupon, she availed herself of Yüeh-niang's mirror stand to retouch her makeup and adjust her attire and then went out to the reception hall.

When the company looked up, they saw that on her head she wore:

A chignon enclosed in a fret of silver filigree,
fastened in place all round with:
Gold filigree pins and combs,
on which:

Pearls and trinkets rose in piles.
Above, she wore:
A blouse of pale lavender silk;
below, she wore:
A skirt of turquoise satin,
revealing:
The upturned points of her tiny golden lotuses,
Decorated with a pair of red phoenixes.
On her painted face she wore:
Three turquoise beauty patches;
From her body:
A gust of exotic fragrance[25] assailed the nostrils.
Facing the seat of honor:
Neither correctly nor precisely,
she performed but a single kowtow, after which:
Hiding her face behind her gold-flecked fan,
While coyly adjusting her hair ornaments,
she took her stand in front of Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Tai-an to set out a brocade-covered stool for her at the head of the seating arrangement so she could offer wine to the guest of honor, Ch'iao Hung.

Ch'iao Hung, however, hastily bowed to her, saying, "There's no need for you to trouble yourself on my behalf. What about these other distinguished relatives?"

"Start off with Master Ch'iao," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Li Kuei-chieh, thereupon:
Lightly flaunted her silken sleeves,
Raised high the golden flagon,
and offered Ch'iao Hung some wine.

"Distinguished sir," exclaimed Ying Po-chüeh from one side, "Please resume your seat and let her serve you. For these painted faces from the Verdant Spring Bordello, providing entertainment and serving wine are their professional responsibilities. You mustn't be overindulgent with them."

“Master Two,” responded Ch’iao Hung, “This young lady is the sweetheart of our distinguished host. How could I possibly presume to put her to any trouble? It would make me:

Ill at ease either sitting or standing.”

“You can relax on that score,” said Ying Po-chüeh. “She is no longer playing the role of a strumpet. On seeing that His Honor has become an official, she has volunteered herself for acceptance as an adopted daughter.”

Li Kuei-chieh’s face turned red, and she said, “You’re delirious! Whoever said such a ridiculous thing?”

“Really,” exclaimed Hsieh Hsi-ta.

“Can such things be?

We didn’t know anything about it. We ought to take advantage of this occasion, when all of you gentlemen are here, not one of us being absent, to contribute five candareens of silver apiece as a gift to our brother here, in celebration of his acquisition of this adopted daughter.”

Ying Po-chüeh picked up where Hsieh Hsi-ta had left off, saying, “It’s a good thing Brother has become an official. It has always been true that:

There is less need to fear officials,

Than there is to fear the officious.[26]

Now that you’ve acquired an adopted daughter to boot, in the future, if you sprinkle a little water on her, barren as she is, she may end up producing a juicy little niece or nephew for me.”[27]

“You lousy dog!” Hsi-men Ch’ing railed at him. “All you ever do is resort to outlandish irony over nothing.”

“Even foreign iron can be forged into a cutting instrument,” retorted Ying Po-chüeh.

“Beggar Ying the Second,” interjected Cheng Ai-hsiang, who was serving wine to Mr. Shen, “If Li Kuei-chieh can be his goddaughter, maybe you can become his godson, which, if you scramble the letters a bit, would make you a gone sod.”[28]

“You lousy little whore!” railed Ying Po-chüeh. “You’re nothing but a dead duck. I’ll stop giving you a hard time about as soon as you start reciting Buddha’s name.”

“Sister Ai-hsiang,” said Li Kuei-chieh, “Why don’t you tell off this beggar for me?”

“Don’t pay any attention to him,” said Cheng Ai-hsiang. “To cite a few familiar phrases, he’s just a:

‘Cock’ a doodle doo,
‘Hold’ onto your hat;

who’s:

A ‘dillar,’ a dollar, a ten o’clock scholar,
Yes,’ my darling daughter.”[29]

“You little whore!” said Ying Po-chüeh. “You may abuse me all you want with that highfalutin lingo of yours. Needless to say, if I were really as infamous as you make out, I’d have ripped off your mother’s pant strings a long time ago. Don’t worry about it. In the future, if I don’t give you something to remember me by, you’ll refuse to acknowledge the General of the Five Ways as a god.”

“We’d better not bother him any further,” said Li Kuei-chieh. “He’s showing all the symptoms of desperation.”

“This Beggar Ying the Second,” said Cheng Ai-hsiang, “is worse than ever today.

He puts his ‘ugly’ ‘niece’ on a pushcart:
the better to parade his ‘ugliness.’[30]
Like the flowers of the wax gourd:
he stinks in and out of season.

It so happens that, he’s really a ‘son of a nun.’ ”

“This little splay-legged whore!” protested Ying Po-chüeh. “Nobody else will have her. I’m the only one willing to make the best of it.”

“You crazy chunk of knife-bait!” exclaimed Li Kuei-chieh. “What a clean mouth you’ve got! You’re knocking the tartar right off her teeth. Father, why don’t you give him a slap or two? Just look at the way he’s carrying on.”

“You crazy clod of a dog!” Hsi-men Ch’ing berated him. “You were the one who wanted them to serve the wine in the first place, so what are you teasing them for?”

Going up to his place at the table, he gave him a slap.

“You lousy little whore!” said Ying Po-chüeh. “You think that as long as you’ve got your lover’s influence behind you, I’ll be afraid of you. Just listen to how sweetly she pronounces the word ‘Father.’ ”

“But don’t have her serve any more wine,” he went on to say. “That’s letting her off too easily. Bring on the instruments, and let her sing a suite of songs for us, or she’ll slip back to the rear compound. She’s been giving us the slip enough as it is.”

“Master Two,” said Han Yü-ch’uan, “you’re like:

The intendant of the Ts’ao-chou Military Defense Circuit:
The area of your jurisdiction is broad.”[31]

There in the front reception hall:

Amid clustering blossoms and clinging brocade,

they continued to drink wine and enjoy themselves. But no more of this.

Let us now return to the story of P’an Chin-lien. Ever since Li P’ing-erh had borne a child, she noticed that Hsi-men Ch’ing constantly chose to spend the night in her quarters. Thereupon, she:

Constantly harbored jealous thoughts,[32] and
Frequently nurtured dissatisfied ideas.

Knowing that Hsi-men Ch’ing was entertaining in the front reception hall, she approached her mirror stand:

Deftly painted her moth eyebrows,
Retouched her cicada-shaped coiffure,
Lightly rouged her ruby lips,

adjusted her attire, and emerged from her room.

On hearing the baby crying in Li P’ing-erh’s quarters, she walked right in and asked, “Since his mother isn’t even here, why is he crying so?”

“His mother has gone to the rear compound,” the wet nurse Ju-i replied. “He’s crying this way because he wants his mother.”

Affecting an ingratiating smile, P'an Chin-lien stepped up and started to play with the baby, saying, "You've hardly been here any time at all, you're just a newborn sprout, and yet you already know enough to look for your mother. Let me carry you back to the rear compound, and we'll see if I can't find your mother for you."

She was about to loosen her blouse and pick the child up, when the wet nurse Ju-i said to her, "Don't pick the baby up, Fifth Lady. I fear he might go wee-wee on you."

"You crazy little stinker!" said Chin-lien. "What is there to worry about? If I hold him on a diaper-cloth, there won't be any problem."

She then took Kuan-ko into her arms, embraced him, and set off straight for the rear compound. As she went through the ceremonial gate leading into the rear courtyard, she raised the child up as high as she could hold him.

Who could have anticipated that Wu Yüeh-niang would be standing in the loggia outside the master suite, overseeing some servants' wives, who were busy replenishing dishes of savories for the party, while Li P'ing-erh and Yü-hsiao were just inside the door, making butterfat "abalone shell" sweets.[33]

P'an Chin-lien, with an ingratiating smile, looked at the child and said, as though in his voice, " 'What are you doing, First Mother?' Now say, Your little Kuan-ko has come looking for his mother.' "

Yüeh-niang, abruptly lifting up her head to see who it was, said, "Fifth Lady, what are you saying? It's a good thing his mother isn't here. Late as it is, what are you doing carrying him back here for no good reason? And lifting him so high up, to boot? I'm afraid you may frighten him. His mother has her hands full just inside the door there."

She then called out, "Sister Li, come outside. Your son has come looking for you."

When Li P'ing-erh hastily came outside and saw Chin-lien holding her baby, she said, "Little Kuan-ko, I left you, perfectly content, in my room, in the arms of the wet nurse. Why have you come looking for me, for no good reason? See that you don't go wee-wee on your fifth mother's clothes."

“He was in your room,” said Chin-lien, “crying like anything for you. So I thought I’d bring him out with me for a walk.”

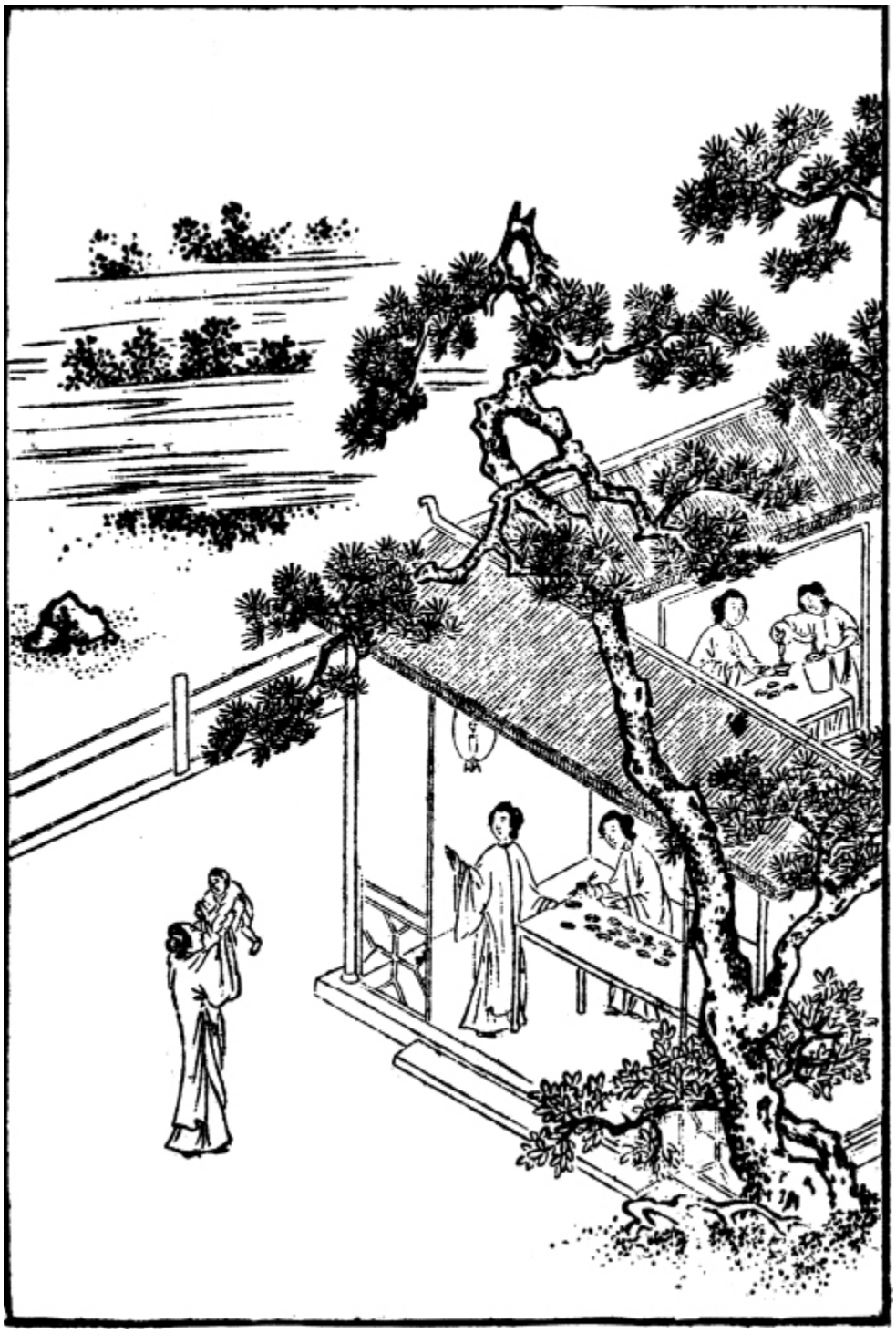
Li P’ing-erh hastily loosened her blouse and took possession of her child.

Yüeh-niang playfully teased the baby for a while and then said, “Carry him carefully back to your quarters, and try not to frighten him.”

When Li P’ing-erh got back to her quarters in the front compound, she said quietly, “Wet nurse, if he starts to cry, you should take your time and try to comfort him until I get back. Why did you let the Fifth Lady take him back to the rear compound looking for me?”

“That’s just what I told her,” said Ju-i, “but the Fifth Lady insisted on carrying him off.”

Li P’ing-erh took the time to watch as Ju-i breast-fed the baby and then put him to bed. Who could have anticipated that, not long after he had fallen asleep, the child started to cry as though something had frightened him in a dream. In the middle of the night, he started to suffer from alternating chills and fever. The wet nurse tried to breast-feed him, but he rejected the milk and continued to cry. Li P’ing-erh became alarmed.



P’an Chin-lien Raises Kuan-ko as High as She Can Hold Him

To resume our story, when Hsi-men Ch’ing’s party in the front compound broke up, he sent the four singing girls home. Yüeh-niang

gave Li Kuei-chieh a set of heavy chiffon velvet brocade clothing and two taels of silver, but there is no need to describe this in detail.

Late that evening, when Hsi-men Ch'ing went to Li P'ing-erh's quarters to see his child, he saw that it was crying and asked what had happened.

Li P'ing-erh did not bring up the fact that P'an Chin-lien had carried him off to the rear compound, merely saying, "I don't know why, but after falling asleep, he woke up and has been crying like this ever since. He also rejects his milk."

"Do your best to pet him back to sleep," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Then he upbraided Ju-i, saying, "Why didn't you look after Kuan-ko properly? What were you doing to frighten him like that?"

Returning to the rear compound, he told Yüeh-niang about it. Yüeh-niang, although she knew that it was Chin-lien's taking him out that had frightened him, did not mention a word about it to Hsi-men Ch'ing, merely saying, "Tomorrow I'll send for Dame Liu to have a look at him."

"Don't have that old whore come and subject him to her:

Bogus acupuncture and quack moxabustion,"[34]

said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Get a licensed pediatrician to treat the child."

Yüeh-niang did not accede to his suggestion, saying, "For a baby who's barely a month old, what need is there for any such thing as a licensed pediatrician?"

Early the next day, after seeing Hsi-men Ch'ing off to work at the yamen, she sent a page boy to ask Dame Liu to come and take a look at him. She said that he was suffering from a fright, and she was given three mace of silver for her pains. Only after the baby had been made to swallow some of the medicine she prescribed did he start to sleep soundly and stop rejecting his milk, which enabled Li P'ing-erh to feel as though:

The stone on her head had finally fallen to the ground.

Truly:

A whole breastful of intimate concerns,
Resides in what is not expressed in words.[35]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 33

CH'EN CHING-CHI LOSES HIS KEYS AND IS DISTRAINED TO SING; HAN TAO-KUO LIBERATES HIS WIFE TO COMPETE FOR ADMIRATION

In this life, although we are not
endowed with foreknowledge,[1]
Wealth and distinction, success and fame,
are not won by exertion.
It is vain to take riches and silk
as one's foundation;
How can human effort hope to contend
with the decree of fate?[2]
The customs of the age, heat and cold,
vainly beguile the eye;
Worldly cares, separation and reunion,
are better quite forgotten.
The superior man proceeds or halts
as he is used or discarded;[3]
If you do not unknit your brow and laugh,
what are you waiting for?[4]

THE STORY GOES that when Hsi-men Ch'ing returned home from the yamen, he had no sooner come in the door than he asked Wu Yüeh-niang, "Is the child any better? Have you sent a page boy after the doctor?"

“I’ve already had Dame Liu here,” replied Yüeh-niang, “and he’s been taking the medication she prescribed. The child is no longer rejecting his milk and has been sleeping soundly for some time. He seems to be somewhat better.”

“How can you trust that old whore, with her:

Bogus acupuncture and quack moxabustion?”

said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “The right thing to do would have been to engage the services of a licensed pediatrician. If he’s better, so much for that. If he’s not any better, I’ll have her taken to the yamen and give the old whore’s fingers a good squeezing for her pains.”

“You and your:

Bad-mouthed and evil-tongued,

abuse!” complained Yüeh-niang. “Your child is currently taking the medication she prescribed and has gotten better. Yet you persist in sticking your mouth out and cursing people!”

When she had finished speaking, a maidservant brought in something to eat.

Hsi-men Ch’ing had scarcely done eating when who should he see but Tai-an, who came in to announce, “Master Ying the Second has come.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing instructed the page boy, “Take some tea out and ask Master Ying the Second to have a seat in the summerhouse.”

Then, turning to Yüeh-niang, he said, “Leave the dishes that I’ve been eating from just as they are and have a page boy take them out, together with some rice, and ask our son-in-law to join him for a snack. I’ll be there momentarily.”

“Where did you send him off to yesterday morning,” asked Yüeh-niang, “that he should be so late getting back?”

Hsi-men Ch’ing then explained to her, “Brother Ying the Second is acquainted with a merchant from Hu-chou, a certain Magnate Ho, who has five hundred taels worth of spun silk in storage at his inn outside the South Gate that he is anxious to dispose of so he can start on his way home. He has let me know that his friend is willing to unload it at a discount. I only agreed to pay four hundred fifty taels of silver. Yesterday I sent him, along with Lai-pao, to take two

large silver ingots as samples of the quality of my silver. The deal has already been struck, and we have arranged to pay over the silver today.

"My thinking is that since the house on Lion Street is empty, I might as well open two rooms on the street front there, have them fixed up to serve as a silk goods shop, and engage a manager to take care of it. Moreover, since Lai-pao is now nominally on the staff of the Prince of Yün, which entitles him to a government salary, he can continue to stay there, along with the manager, to look after the house, on the one hand, and take charge of the business, on the other."

"There's no getting around the need to find another manager," said Yüeh-niang.

"Brother Ying the Second," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "has told me that he has an acquaintance named Han who was originally in the silk goods trade but is currently out of capital and sitting idle at home. He says that he is proficient at writing and arithmetic, and that:

His conduct is upright and correct,

and has repeatedly offered to stand as a guarantor for him. One of these days he's going to bring him to meet me and we'll arrange the terms of a contract."

When he had finished speaking, Hsi-men Ch'ing weighed out four hundred fifty taels of silver and told Lai-pao to take charge of it. Ch'en Ching-chi had already finished eating with Ying Po-chüeh in the summerhouse. The latter had waited until he was:

Burning with impatience,

but when he saw the silver brought out, he was:

Delighted in his heart.[5]

Bowing to Hsi-men Ch'ing, he said, "After imposing on your hospitality yesterday, I got home late, and it was all I could do to crawl out of bed this morning."

"I've weighed out four hundred and fifty taels of silver here," explained Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and I'll have Lai-pao fetch a bag and pack it while we both look on. Today is an auspicious day for such a

proceeding, so we'll hire a pushcart to transport the goods, and lock them up for the time being in the house over there. That ought to take care of it."

"What you propose makes sense, Brother," said Ying Po-chüeh. Where these Southerners are concerned:

If you delay things you'll only give them ideas.[6]

Have the goods carted in and the business will be completed."

Thereupon, he and Lai-pao mounted their horses and, taking the silver with them, went straight out to the inn outside the South Gate and completed the transaction. Who could have known that Ying Po-chüeh had colluded with Magnate Ho on a price of only four hundred twenty taels of silver, so that he profited by a kickback of thirty taels? For public consumption, when the deal was closed a commission of only nine taels of silver was forthcoming, which Ying Po-chüeh and Lai-pao divided equally between them. They then proceeded to hire a pushcart and have the goods transported into the city that very day, stored them in an empty room in the house on Lion Street, locked the door, and came back to report to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Hsi-men Ch'ing told Ying Po-chüeh to pick an auspicious day and bring Manager Han to see him. He turned out to be short of stature and twenty-nine-years-old.

His speech was voluble,
His appearance was imposing,
His face was blithe as the spring breeze,[7]
His manner was congenial.

That very day Hsi-men Ch'ing signed a contract with him, by the terms of which he and Lai-pao were to receive the capital from him to hire workers to dye silk, open up a storefront[8] in the house on Lion Street, and offer a complete line of silk goods for sale. Every day they sold several tens of taels worth of merchandise. But no more of this.

Light and darkness alternate swiftly;
The sun and moon shoot back and forth like shuttles.

Before anyone knew it, it was the fifteenth day of the eighth month, Wu Yüeh-niang's birthday. A group of female guests was invited to a party to celebrate the event, and her elder brother Wu K'ai's wife, Old Mrs. P'an, and Aunt Yang were asked to stay overnight so they could listen to the two Buddhist nuns recite sacred texts and sing Buddhist songs for them. On such occasions they often stayed up until the second or third watch before going to bed.

On this particular night, because his sister-in-law, Wu K'ai's wife, was staying in the master suite and it would be inconvenient for him to be there, Hsi-men Ch'ing went to Li P'ing-erh's quarters in the front compound to have a look at Kuan-ko and intended to sleep in Li P'ing-erh's room.

"The child is only now a little better," said Li P'ing-erh, "and I'm not in the mood for it. Why don't you go spend the night in the Fifth Lady's room?"

"I won't bother you then," Hsi-men Ch'ing said with a laugh.

Thereupon he went over to P'an Chin-lien's place. When Chin-lien heard her husband come into her quarters, she felt just as though she had:

Discovered a piece of gold or a precious stone,

and lost no time in bundling Old Mrs. P'an off to spend the night in Li P'ing-erh's place.

In her bedroom she then proceeded to:

Ignite the highly placed silver lamp,
Deftly unroll the embroidered quilt,
Light incense and wash her private parts,

so that she could sleep together with Hsi-men Ch'ing that night.

The feelings expressed by the pillow side,
Were too multifarious to describe in detail.

Her every endeavor was designed to ensnare her lover's heart so that he would not stray into anyone else's room. Truly:

Drumming its antennae, the roving bee,
Finding the tender corolla half open,
  beguiles away the spring;
Sipping fragrance, the powdered butterfly,

Resting deep in the womb of the flower,
disports itself by night.[9]

When Li P'ing-erh saw Old Mrs. P'an come over to her place, she hastily offered her a seat on the k'ang and ordered Ying-ch'un to serve wine and bake some wheat cakes so they could enjoy an evening chat. The night was half over before they went to sleep.

The next day she gave Old Mrs. P'an a pale green satin jacket, two pairs of satin shoe uppers, and two hundred candareens, which pleased the old lady so much she was ready to:

Fart ferociously and pee in her pants.

Returning to her daughter's quarters, she showed these things to Chin-lien, saying, "These were all given to me by your sister over there."

When Chin-lien saw them, however, she criticized her mother, saying, "How can you be so:

Mean-spirited and covetous?[10]

What's so great about these things that you should be taking handouts from her?"

"A fine one to talk you are!" said Old Mrs. P'an. "When someone has been considerate enough to give me something, you start talking like that. What did *you* ever give me to wear?"

"I can't be compared to those sisters who have money of their own," said Chin-lien. "I don't have anything to wear myself. What would I give to you? And now, for no good reason, you've accepted favors at someone else's hands. In a little while, we'll simply have to get together a few dishes of something, pour out a flagon of wine, and go over to her place to return the favor. Otherwise, in the future, someone is sure to:

Engage in idle tittle-tattle.

I've had enough of that, thank you."

She then directed Ch'un-mei to prepare eight dishes of food, four boxes of delicacies, and a pewter flagon of wine. Having ascertained that Hsi-men Ch'ing was not at home, she told Ch'iu-chü to put the things in square boxes and carry them over to Li P'ing-erh's quarters, where she was to say, "Mother and Grandmother would

like to come over, if you are free, and share a cup of wine with you."

"I've put your mother to trouble again," said Li P'ing-erh.

In a little while, Chin-lien and Old Mrs. P'an came over, and the three of them sat down together for a drink. Ch'un-mei stood in attendance upon them, and poured the wine.

As they were talking, who should they see but Ch'iu-chü, who had come to call Ch'un-mei, saying, "Son-in-law Ch'en is over at our place looking for some clothes that have been pawned. He wants you to go open the outer door to the second floor for him."

"Tell our son-in-law," instructed Chin-lien, "that after he has retrieved the clothes, he should come over here and have a goblet of wine before going on with his business."

Before long, Ch'en Ching-chi found the several sets of clothes he was looking for and headed out toward the front of the compound.

Ch'un-mei came in and reported, "He won't come in."

"Whatever it takes, drag him in if necessary," said Chin-lien, and she sent Hsiu-ch'un out, who succeeded in inviting him in.

Old Mrs. P'an was sitting on the k'ang beside a small table, arrayed with various dishes and delicacies, while Chin-lien and Li P'ing-erh kept her company in drinking wine. Ch'en Ching-chi hastily made them a bow.

"I told you to come have a drink with the best of intentions," said Chin-lien. Why have you made excuses and refused to come? At this rate you'll be out of luck before you know it."

Making a meaningful moue, she instructed Ch'un-mei, "Fetch a capacious cup and fill it for our son-in-law to drink."

Ch'en Ching-chi put the clothes he had come for down on the k'ang and sat down. Ch'un-mei, who was a practiced hand at the routine, fetched a tea bowl, filled it to the brim, and handed it to him.

"It's very gracious of you, Fifth Lady," Ching-chi exclaimed in consternation, "but I'd rather drink two small cups, if you don't mind. There are a lot of people out in the shop waiting for their clothes."

“Let them wait,” said Chin-lien. “I insist upon your drinking this big cup. Who has the patience to bother with those piddling little cups?”

“Let the young man go after this one cup,” said Old Mrs. P’an. “I fear his business is pressing.”

“Don’t you believe it,” said Chin-lien. “What’s he got to be busy about? He can manage no small quantity of wine. In fact:

On a gold-varnished wine bucket,
He can drink down as far as the second hoop.”

Ching-chi laughed at this and addressed himself to the wine.

He had barely swallowed two mouthfuls, when Old Mrs. P’an said to Ch’un-mei, “Sister, give him a pair of chopsticks. Don’t have him drink on an empty stomach.”

Ch’un-mei did not provide him with a pair of chopsticks but, in the endeavor to bedevil him further, picked two walnuts out of a partitioned box and offered them to him.

Ching-chi took them from her, saying, “No doubt you expect to get a laugh at my expense if I’m unable to crack them.”

Thereupon, putting them between his teeth, he broke them into pieces with a single bite and downed them along with his wine.

“He’s still a youngster,” said Old Mrs. P’an, “with a good set of teeth in his mouth. For an old body like myself, if things are at all hard, I just can’t eat them.”

“There are only two things in this world,” boasted Ching-chi, “that I am unable to eat. Pebbles and water buffalo horns.”

When Chin-lien saw that he had downed the cup of wine, she told Ch’un-mei to refill it, saying, “That first cup was for me. But are not my mother and the Sixth Lady as worthy of the honor as myself? I wouldn’t want you to drink too much. Just down these three cups and I’ll let you off.”

“Fifth Lady,” pled Ching-chi, “take pity on your son. I can’t drink any more. With just this one cup, I fear my face must be red, and Father may take it amiss.”

“So you’re afraid of your father-in-law are you,” said Chin-lien. “I thought you weren’t afraid of him. Where is he going to go out drinking today?”

“This afternoon he’s going to Station Master Wu Tien-en’s place for a drink,” reported Ching-chi. “Right now he’s across the street at Ch’iao Hung’s house, supervising the alterations.”

“Mr. Ch’iao’s family moved out yesterday,” said Chin-lien. “Shouldn’t we have sent them a present of tea today?”

“The present of tea was sent off this morning,” said Ching-chi.

“Where have they moved to?” asked Li P’ing-erh.

“They’ve spent one thousand two hundred taels of silver,” said Ching-chi, “to buy a great big place on East Main Street, not very different from our own. It’s got a forty-two-foot-wide frontage opening onto the street and five interior courtyards, receding along a vertical axis.”

As they were talking, Ching-chi managed by holding his nose to swallow a second cup of wine, after which, as soon as he thought no one was looking, he grabbed up the clothes and disappeared in a puff of smoke.

“Mother,” Ying-ch’un then remarked, “look at that. Your son-in-law has forgotten to take his keys with him.”

Chin-lien proceeded to pick them up and then sit down on top of them, saying to Li P’ing-erh, “When he comes looking for them, don’t any of you give the game away. Let me have a little fun with him before returning them.”

“My child,” said Old Mrs. P’an, “you really ought to return them. What do you want to fool around with him for?”

When Ch’en Ching-chi returned to the pawn shop and groped in his sleeve, he couldn’t find the keys and headed straight back to Li P’ing-erh’s quarters to look for them.

“Whoever saw any keys of yours?” Chin-lien said. “You must have had the keys in your hand while doing something else and left them there without realizing it.”

“I fear you may have left them locked in the second floor storage area,” said Ch’un-mei. “I didn’t notice your having them with you

just now."

"I remember bringing them out with me," said Ching-chi.

"What a child!" said Chin-lien. "I dare say:

The hole in your bottom's so big:
Your mind has dropped out.

Who knows who it could be, either at home or abroad, who's got such a hold on you that:

You possess a soul but lack perception;
Your heart is no longer over your liver."

"There are customers waiting to redeem their clothes," said Ching-chi. "What am I to do? Before Father comes back, I'll have to call in a tinker to get the second-floor door open and see if they're there or not."

Li P'ing-erh could no longer contain herself and started to giggle.

"Sixth Lady," exclaimed Ching-chi, "if you have picked them up, give them to me."

"I've never seen anything like it," said Chin-lien. "I don't know what Sister Li is laughing at him about, as though we'd taken his keys or something."

Ching-chi was so anxious all he could do was:

Turn round and round like a millstone,[11]

until his roving eye caught sight of the ribbon attached to the keys, which was sticking out from underneath Chin-lien's body.

"Aren't those the keys there," he exclaimed.

Just as he was about to reach for them with his hand, Chin-lien slipped them into her sleeve and refused to give them to him, saying, "How could any keys of yours have fallen into my hands?"

This so flustered the youngster that all he could do was to kneel down on the ground before her:

Dragging his knees like a chicken
on the chopping block.

"They say you can sing a pretty song," said Chin-lien, "but you perform only for the benefit of the page boys in the shop out front. Why don't you sing me a song? Take advantage of the fact that your

grandmother and the Sixth Lady are here today. If you select good ones, that we haven't heard before, and sing four of them for us, I'll let you have those keys. Otherwise, though you should:

Jump as high as the top of the White Pagoda,[12]

the keys will not be forthcoming."

"This Fifth Lady," exclaimed Ching-chi, "is enough to give one a case of heartburn. Whoever told you I could sing?"

"Still up to your tricks, are you?" said Chin-lien.

"Just as Nanking has its Shen Wan-san,[13]
Peking has its withered willows;[14]
Just as a man has his reputation,
A tree has its shadow."[15]

The young scamp, unable to withstand her teasing any longer, said:

"It's not going to kill me.[16]

I'll sing for you then. I've got a bellyful of songs. If I were to really:

Exercise my mind and poke up my liver;

should you demand a hundred, I'd come up with them."

"Still shooting off your mouth, are you, you short-life!" Chin-lien berated him.

She personally poured a full measure of wine for everyone present and then said to him, "Have another cup to cover your stage fright as you sing."

"I'll sing first and then drink at my leisure," said Ching-chi. "I'll sing a couple of songs for you on the names of fruits and flowers[17] to the tune 'Sheep on the Mountain Slope.' "

When we first met, we "plighted our faith
in the Peach Orchard."[18]
Once we were acquainted, I put you on a pedestal
like an "imperial damson."
Everyone said that you were carousing amid the
turquoise blossoms in the green bowers;
Which upset me so much I scratched your apple cheeks
to smithereens.

You louse, you took after the barberry in being
“solid without but hollow within”;
Which upset me so much the pearly tears fell from
my plum-shaped eyes.
I sent a pair of slave-catching peaches[19]
to track you down.
They caught you dating under the wild persimmon tree,
so I knew you had left me;
Which upset me so much I looked like a
“crane’s crest red” litchi,
And was reduced to cutting off a hank of
my black plum-thread hair.
You’re as smooth as any mandarin, yet
you say I don’t make sense.
“Go, mango! You’re as stubborn as an ox!”
I curse the ruffian.
“If you press me too hard, I’ll just hang myself
from a drooping branch,
And look to see, next autumn, whom you’ve got to
depend on in my place.”

I heard the golden sparrow (caragana) warbling
before my eyes;
But he abandoned me as lightly as a goose feather
(chrysanthemum),
Leaving me to cry my heart out underneath
the speckled bamboo blind.
When a pair of auspicious magpies announced
the good news,[20]
I wondered who it might be;
Never expecting the cassia, for whom I had
been “Gazing toward the Southland.”
I had not yet finished redoing my coiffure
under the smartweed blossoms,
When the dog-teat (foxglove) ran to the door
to bite my visitor.

I surreptitiously sent my maid, Jasmine Blossom,
to look everywhere for you.
You leaned on the seven sisters trellis,
Stuck out your clove-shaped tongue,
And called me your plantain lily.
The Chinese lantern plant, acting as my Hung-niang,[21]
slowly led you into my quarters.
Under the blossoms of the verdant peach trees,[22]
we compared botanical specimens a while.
Then you had your way with me; I dropped the
marigold in my hand,
And we became entangled with each other
amid the passionflowers.
I ended up calling you my handsome
pomegranate blossom.
But if you suffer my maid, Chrysanthemum,
To tell the tale to my seven sisters,
What sort of picture would that convey?
It would only make a laughing stock of me.

When he had finished singing he asked Chin-lien for the keys, saying, “Fifth Lady, give them to me right away. The manager in the shop has been waiting for me for ever so long. I’m afraid Father might show up at any moment.”

“You’re certainly bent on having an easy time of it,” said Chin-lien. “And you put it so cleverly. If your father should ask me, I’ll just say you were out drinking somewhere, lost the keys, and came into my room looking for them.”

“Ai-ya!” Ching-chi exclaimed. “Fifth Lady, you’re really:

An executioner who likes to play with his victims.”

Li P’ing-erh and Old Mrs. P’an repeatedly chimed in from the sidelines, saying, “Sister, let him have them so he can go about his business.”

“If it weren’t for the good offices of my mother and the Sixth Lady,” said Chin-lien, “I’d certainly make you sing until the day is

done. At the outset you boasted that you could come up with a hundred or two hundred. And now, after singing only two songs, you want to take flight. I'm not going to let you get away with it."

"I've still got a couple of specialty numbers up my sleeve," said Ching-chi. They're a pair of songs on the terminology of silver and coinage[23] to the tune 'Sheep on the Mountain Slope,' which I might as well offer for your delectation."

Thereupon:

Commencing to sing in full voice,

he sang:

Dear enemy! Your absence has made a mopus[24] of me
for lo this whole month;
Leaving me to pound my breast in vain, quite unable
to sycee[25] things up.
I sent that little nugget, Lion-head, with a yellow
chit to summon you;
But you were in Ministry of War Hollow,[26] having a merry
night of it at the Silver Ingot.
I'm willing to put up with your brass, verdigris
and all, to avoid abandonment;
You're imprinted in my heart like stamped silver;
there's no way I can do without you.
If I call out for you, you turn away your obverse
side and pay me no heed;
Even when I use blowpipes to heat up your crucible,
you make me wait half the night.
The bamboo pattern stamped on my face turns sallow,
and I gnash my silver teeth;
Invoking the Goddess of Legal Tender,[27] I bolt fast
the door to my room.
That defaced brockage[28] of a man may hammer in vain,
I'll pay him no heed.
I curse him for a remelted, thrice-cast, specimen of
a two-timing crooked louse.

I've poured the molten metal of my heart into your mint,
only to be rejected as too hot-blooded.

Sister! When you were at K'ai-yüan's[29] place the two of us
burned incense and swore oaths together.[30]
I spent jingling cash[31] and shiny-edged coins in order to
be one of those who danced attendance on you.
But you claimed your furnace[32] was out of order, and I
couldn't take the goose-eyes[33] of your madam.
It may be said of you that "elm-pod cash[34] are lightweight,
and brush-handles are hollow."



Ch’en Ching-chi Loses His Keys and Is Distrained to Sing

Sister! Like an antique cash; your body’s shrunk and your
hole’s too big, no longer of any use;
Unless you let some bare stick,[35] with a worn legend,
play up to you with his oily mouth.

Baring your shiny tail, milled rim,[36] and baked lacquer[37] hue,
he'd debase you into utter compliance,
And then leave you so topsy-turvy you wouldn't be worth
so much as a single black sand-plate.[38]
"Sister!" I call out. "You two-faced androgynous mule![39]
Just you try and listen to what I say.
It would be a pity if this shiny gold-back[40] were paired with
such a wrinkle-faced, mis-struck ingot."

Ching-chi having finished his song, Chin-lien was about to have Ch'un-mei pour out more wine for him, when Wu Yüeh-niang suddenly showed up from the rear compound.

Noticing that the wet nurse Ju-i was sitting on the stone stylobate outside the door, holding Kuan-ko on her lap, she said to her, "The child is just recovering, you bitch! And here you are, holding him out here and exposing him to the wind. Why don't you take him inside?"

"Who is that speaking?" asked Chin-lien.

"The First Lady is here," Hsiu-ch'un replied.

Ching-chi hastily grabbed his keys and fled outside, as fast as he could go, while the rest of them came down the steps to welcome Yüeh-niang.

"What is our son-in-law doing here?" Yüeh-niang asked.

"Sister Li has prepared a snack and asked my mother over for a visit," said Chin-lien. "When our son-in-law came looking for some clothes, she invited him in for a drink. Sister, please have a seat. It's good sweet wine. Won't you have a cup?"

"I won't have any," said Yüeh-niang. "My elder brother's wife and Aunt Yang are in the rear compound, about to go home. I was concerned about the child and came straight over to see how he is. Sister Li, you're not paying adequate attention. You've let the wet nurse take him outside and sit down where he's exposed to the wind. The other day Dame Liu said he had caught a chill. You really ought to look after him more carefully."

“We were just having a drink with Old Mrs. P’an,” Li P’ing-erh said. “Who could have known that lousy little stinker would carry him outside without anyone’s knowing it.”

Yüeh-niang sat down for a bit and then returned to the rear compound.

A little while later, she sent Hsiao-yü to invite Old Mrs. P’an, the Fifth Lady, and the Sixth Lady to come back to the rear compound for a visit. P’an Chin-lien and Li P’ing-erh put their makeup to rights and accompanied Old Mrs. P’an to the rear compound to join the other ladies for a drink with Yüeh niang’s sister-in-law and Aunt Yang. At sundown they all went out with Yüeh-niang to see their visitors off outside the front gate, where they got into their sedan chairs and departed.

As they were standing in the gateway, Meng Yü-lou started things off, saying, “Elder Sister. Since Father’s not at home today, having gone to station master Wu’s place for a drink, why don’t we take advantage of the opportunity to go take a look at the former Ch’iao family’s house across the street?”

Yüeh-niang asked the page boy P’ing-an, who was in charge of the gate, “Who’s got the keys to the place over there?”

“If you ladies want to go over and have a look,” said P’ing-an, “the door’s open. Lai-hsing is supervising two laborers who are at work on the place.”

“Go tell them to get out of the way while we take a look,” Yüeh-niang instructed him.

“You ladies go ahead and have your look,” said P’ing-an, “it won’t be any problem. They’re all at work:

Mixing lime and sifting sand,

in the big empty structure four courtyards back from the street. I’ll just go and call them out.”

Thereupon, Wu Yüeh-niang, Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P’an Chin-lien, and Li P’ing-erh were carried, one at a time, in a sedan chair, for the short haul to the house across the street, by the two laborers, who acted as bearers. On entering the ceremonial gate,

they found an eighteen-foot-wide reception hall, beyond which, in the second courtyard, there was a two-story structure.

Yüeh-niang started to go up to the second floor, but:

Strange as it may seem,

before she was halfway up the stairs, which were unexpectedly steep, she was heard to utter a gasp, and one of her feet slipped out from under her. Fortunately, she was able to grab hold of the banisters to either side of the stairway, while Yü-lou, exclaiming in consternation, “What is it, Sister?” hastily gripped her by the arm and was able to prevent her from falling.

Yüeh-niang had been taken by surprise and refused to proceed any further. By the time her companions had helped her down to the foot of the stairs, the shock of the unexpected occurrence had turned her face as sallow as wax.

“Sister,” asked Yü-lou, “what happened? Your foot must have slipped on the way up. Have you hurt yourself anywhere?”

“I may have managed to escape a fall,” said Yüeh-niang, “but I’ve twisted my waist, and the shock has made:

My heart jump into my mouth.

The stairs are steep, and I made the mistake of assuming they were just like the ones we have at home. My foot slipped on the way up. It’s lucky I was able to grab hold of the banisters. Otherwise, who knows what might have happened.”

“On top of everything else,” said Yü-lou, “you’re feeling poorly in your present condition. It would have been better not to climb the stairs in the first place.”

Thereupon, the group of sisters escorted Yüeh-niang back home, but no sooner did they arrive there than, as if in response to a call, she began to suffer from abdominal cramps. Unable to withstand the pain, Yüeh-niang took advantage of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s absence to send a page boy after Dame Liu to come and treat her.

“You’ve already ceased menstruating,” said Dame Liu, “and now you’ve hurt yourself. I’m afraid it’s all over.”

“I’ve been pregnant for more than five months,” said Yüeh-niang, “and now I’ve wrenched myself going up the stairs.”

“You’d better take a dose of my medicine,” said Dame Liu. “If you can’t carry it to term, you might as well abort it.”

“All right, I’ll abort it then,” Yüeh-niang replied.

Dame Liu thereupon left behind two doses of medicine, in the form of large black pills, and told Yüeh-niang to take them along with a decoction of artemisia-flavored wine. Before the night was half over, she evacuated the fetus, and when they lit a candle to examine the contents of the commode, it turned out to be that of a male child that had already assumed recognizable shape. Truly:

Before the embryo was able to emerge
  into the fullness of life,
Its true soul first made the journey
  to the Realm of the Shades.

Fortunately, when Hsi-men Ch’ing came home that day, he did not sleep in the master suite but spent the night in Meng Yu-lou’s quarters instead. The next day, Yü-lou paid a visit to the master suite in the morning, to ask Yüeh-niang how she was feeling.

“Sure enough,” Yüeh-niang reported, “in the middle of the night, I was unable to retain it and suffered a miscarriage. And it turned out to have been a boy.”

“What a pity!” exclaimed Yü-lou. “Does Father not know about it?”

“Father had been drinking when he got home,” explained Yüeh-niang. “He came into my room and started to take off his clothes, but I said to him, You go to someone else’s quarters tonight. I’m feeling out of sorts.’ It was only then that he went over to your place. I didn’t tell him anything about it. Even now I’m still suffering from vague pains in the abdomen.”

“I fear there may be some remaining blood that you still haven’t voided,” said Yü-lou. “If you drink some wine suffused with pot soot,[41] that should take care of it.”

“Sister,” she went on to say, “you really ought to look after yourself for a few days. Stay in your room and don’t go out. The consequences of a miscarriage can be even harder to treat than

those of a regular childbirth. If you were to catch cold under these circumstances, it would be hard on your system."

"That goes without saying," Yüeh-niang responded. "But I don't want it bruited about till everybody hears of it. They'll make a big fuss for no good reason, and say I'm brooding over an empty nest, or something like that. It will only cause tongues to wag."

For this reason, Hsi-men Ch'ing was never told what had happened. Now that this matter has been explained, we will say no more about it.

To resume our story, the manager that Hsi-men Ch'ing had just engaged to take charge of his new silk goods shop was not the sort to abide by his lot. His surname was Han, his given name was Tao-kuo, and his courtesy name was Hsi-yao. He was the son of a decadent man-about-town named Baldy Han but had now fallen on hard times. He had succeeded to his grandfather's hereditary position as a commandant on the staff of the Prince of Yün. At present he resided on Oxhide Lane, off East Street.

> Frivolous and flighty by nature,
> His words overstate the facts.[42]
> Possessed of a clever tongue,
> He is a glib conversationalist.
> Those to whom he promises money, end up
> Catching at shadows and clutching the wind;[43]
> But bilking others of their due, he finds
> As easy as groping for something in a bag.[44]

For these reasons, the people in his neighborhood, observing how meretricious he was, casually referred to him as Posturer Han.

Now that he had begun to do business for Hsi-men Ch'ing and felt flush with the money and silk at his disposal, he invested in a brand new outfit of "dung beetle skins,"[45] in which he swaggered about the neighborhood, hunching up his shoulders and putting on the dog. When people saw him, they did not refer to him by his courtesy name as Han Hsi-yao, but as Han I-yao, or Swaggery Han.

His wife was a younger sister of Butcher Wang, who slaughtered cattle for a living. She was called Wang Liu-erh, or Wang the Sixth,

because she was the sixth sibling in her generation. She was tall of stature, had a face shaped like a melon seed, and a rosewood complexion, and was twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. She had given birth to a daughter, so there were three of them living together in the family.

Han Tao-kuo's younger brother, Han the Second, was nicknamed Trickster Han. He was a gambler and "knockabout" and lived apart from his brother's family. He and his sister-in-law were engaged in a long-standing illicit affair. Whenever he felt like it, he would take advantage of Han Tao-kuo's absence, on the days he had to spend the night at the shop, to drop in and have a drink with the woman; and, when it became late, if he was on the make, he would refuse to leave.

Who could have anticipated that there were a number of dissolute young scamps in the neighborhood who took note of the way in which the woman was given to:

Putting on rouge and applying powder,[46]

and making a spectacle of herself by standing in the doorway at all hours in order to ogle the passersby. Yet if anyone rose to the bait by making a suggestive remark to her, she would respond by being:

Both hard and smelly,

and showering him with vituperation.

For this reason, these young scamps in the neighborhood were something less than well disposed toward her.

Gathering together in twos and threes,

they surreptitiously discussed her conduct and determined to find out if she were engaged in hanky-panky with anyone behind her husband's back. It took them less than half a month to ascertain the fact that she was, indeed, carrying on with her brother-in-law, Han the Second.

It so happens that the house in which Han Tao-kuo resided on Oxhide Lane had an eighteen-foot-wide frontage, was bounded by the houses of neighbors to either side, and had a rear gate that opened onto the embankment of a reservoir. Whenever this group of young scamps saw Han the Second go inside, they would engage the

services of an old woman to intrude by offering to sprinkle the courtyard; or, at night, they would climb onto the hind wall to keep an eye on things; or, by day, send a little monkey onto the rear embankment, pretending to chase after moths; their one endeavor being to catch them in the act.

Who could have anticipated that, one day, Han the Second, having ascertained that his elder brother was not at home, brought some wine with him, got drunk with the woman in broad daylight, locked the door on the inside, and fell to it with her in the bedroom. Unbeknownst to them, the group of young scamps, having got wind of this, sent a little monkey to climb over the wall and open the rear gate, on which the whole bunch of them rushed in together and contrived to jerk open the door to the room. Han the Second tried to bolt out the gate, but one of the youths managed to:

Knock him over with one blow,

and he was taken captive. The woman was still on the k'ang, trying desperately to get into her clothes, when one of them came in and prevented this by grabbing her pants in his hand.

The two of them were trussed together with a single length of rope and taken outside, where, in no time at all, a crowd had gathered around the gateway and followed them to the township subprecinct station on Oxhide Lane. As a result of this, the entire street was in an uproar.



Han Tao-kuo Liberates His Wife to Compete for Admiration

This one came to ask,
That one came to see.

Everyone said that Han Tao-kuo's wife had been caught in an illicit affair with her brother-in-law.

A certain oldster among them, on seeing the man and the woman trussed up together, asked the people standing around, "What's this affair all about?"

A busybody next to him replied, "You mean you haven't heard about it, sir? This is a case of a brother-in-law engaging in illicit intercourse with his elder brother's wife."

The oldster nodded his head, saying, "How reprehensible! It so happens that when a brother messes around with his sister-in-law, if they should be convicted of violating the statute governing illicit relations between brother and sister-in-law, both of them would be condemned to strangulation."[47]

The busybody by his side recognized the oldster to be the notorious Crud-crawler T'ao, who was known to have "crawled in the crud" successively with all three of his daughters-in-law.[48]

For this reason he intruded himself further by saying, "You appear to be well versed in the law, sir. Since this case of a brother-in-law having sexual relations with his elder brother's wife is a crime entailing the punishment of strangulation, if a father-in-law were to do the same with his daughter-in-law, of what crime do you think he would he be guilty?"[49]

The oldster, noting the untoward turn the conversation was taking, lowered his head, without saying another word, and beat a hasty retreat. Truly:

> Every person should sweep the snow
> in front of his own eaves;
> Without bothering about the frost
> upon his neighbor's roof.[50]

We will say no more for the moment about how Han the Second and his paramour were caught in the act but return to the story of Han Tao-kuo.

That day was not one of those on which he had to spend the night at the shop, so he was able to leave for home early. It was the middle decade of the eighth month. Sporting an outfit of light silk

and soft damask, a newly blocked hat, a pair of fancy hairnet rings, jet satin shoes, and pure velveteen socks, and fanning himself as he went, he swaggered along the street:

Cutting a wide swath with his exaggerated strides.

Whenever he chanced to meet anyone, he made an occasion of it, either sitting or standing, while:

His words flowed like a cataract,[51]

Billowing out without interruption.[52]

Among those he encountered were two acquaintances, Chang the Second, the proprietor of a paper shop, and Pai the Fourth, who was a silversmith, to whom he hastened to make an obeisance and raise his hand in greeting.

"Brother Han," responded Chang, whose nickname was Chang the Importunate, "Long time no see. I hear that you are to be congratulated for going into business in the shop that His Honor Hsi-men Ch'ing has just opened on his premises. We are lacking in courtesy not to have offered our felicitations before this. I hope you won't take it amiss."

As he spoke, he offered him a seat.

Adopting a lofty expression and flaunting the fan in his hand, Han Tao-kuo sat down on a bench, and said, "Though your pupil is devoid of talent, thanks to the diffracted radiance shed by you gentlemen, I have been enabled to become a manager in the employ of my gracious master, His Honor Hsi-men Ch'ing. We split the profits on a 30 to 70 percent ratio, I have enormous sums at my disposal and am in charge of shops at several locations. Indeed, I am treated with such respect as to set me apart from others."

A certain Hsieh Ju-huang, whose nickname was What a Whopper, responded, "From what I hear, Brother Han, all he has seen fit to charge you with is the management of his silk goods shop."

"There are things of which you two gentlemen are ignorant," pronounced Han Tao-kuo with a laugh. "The matter of the silk goods business is no more than an empty title. Nowadays, which one of the accounts of the various enterprises of his establishment, both great and small, are not in my hands?

He listens to my words and follows my advice,[53]
Fortune and misfortune are shared between us.

Without me, he couldn't get along for so much as an hour.

"Every day, when he comes home from the yamen, he invites me to share his meal with him. Without me, he wouldn't even have the appetite to eat anything. The two of us while away the time in his little studio, eating delicacies and chatting with each other; often sitting there until the night is half over before he goes back to the rear compound.

"The other day, on his First Lady's birthday, my wife went in a sedan chair to pay her respects, and his lady kept her so long at the party that she didn't get home until the second watch.

Our two families are so intimate,
There are no restraints between us.[54]

I probably oughtn't to tell you this, but even the most private events in his bedchamber are among the topics on which he often consults with me.

"To begin with:

My conduct is upright and correct,
My heart opposed to all compromise.

On behalf of my wealthy patron, I am able to:

Promote profit and prevent loss,[55]
Rescuing him from water or fire.[56]

In all cases, I am:

Scrupulous where money is concerned,[57]
Acquiring it only by legitimate means.

Even Manager Fu the Second stands somewhat in awe of me. It's not that I'm boasting about myself, the fact is that His Honor values me precisely for this quality."

Just as his tongue was in full spate, all of a sudden, someone came running up in a state of obvious agitation, saying, "Brother Han, what are you still jabbering here for? I wasn't able to find you at the shop."

Drawing him aside to a secluded spot, he told him, “At your house:

Thus and thus, and
So and so,

your wife and your younger brother have been caught in the act by the neighbors, who have trussed them up and taken them to the subprecinct station. Tomorrow morning they’ll be escorted to the district yamen to appear before the magistrate. You’d better bestir yourself to pull whatever strings you can, if you want to take care of this matter.”

When Han Tao-kuo heard this, he:

Turned pale with consternation,[58]
Licking his lips, above, and
Stamping his feet, below,

in his haste to take flight.

At this point, Chang the Importunate called out to him, “Brother Han, you haven’t finished your story. Why are you so anxious to get away?”

Han Tao-kuo raised his hand in acknowledgment, saying, “Your pupil has an insignificant matter to attend to at home, which prevents me from keeping you company any longer.” After which, he made a hasty departure. Truly:

Even if one could draw off all the water
of the West River,
It would hardly suffice to wash away
this day’s shame.

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 34

SHU-T'UNG RELIES UPON HIS FAVOR TO BROKER AFFAIRS; P'ING-AN HARBORS RESENTMENT AND WAGS HIS TONGUE

In relying upon one's official prestige in order to
do as one pleases;
One ought not to let joy or anger confuse the spheres
of public and private.
Coveting wealth, he pays no heed whatever to
the violation of ethical norms;
Given to lust, he shows total disregard for
breaches of propriety and reason.
His hangers-on avail themselves of his name
to seek personal advantage;
His wanton slaves employ ingratiating gestures
to effect surreptitious ends.
If you wish to know the principles that govern
subsequent success or failure;
The doings of the day provide all one needs to
extrapolate them by analogy.

THE STORY GOES that when Han Tao-kuo arrived home and found that his wife and his brother, Han the Second, had been trussed up and taken to the subprecinct station, he hastened back to the shop on Lion Street to consult with Lai-pao.

“You’d better go directly to Uncle Ying the Second,” said Lai-pao, “and ask him to intercede with your master. If he sends a note about it to Magistrate Li in the district yamen, no matter how important a matter it might be, that ought to take care of it.”

Han Tao-kuo went straight to Ying Po-chüeh’s house, but his wife sent out a maidservant who reported, “He’s not at home. Who knows where he may have gotten to. More likely than not, he’s at His Honor Hsi-men’s place.”

“If he’s not at home,” said Han Tao-kuo, “let me speak to Ying Pao.” But it turned out that he had gone out with his father.

This threw Han Tao-kuo into a panic, and he went looking for him in the licensed quarter.

It so happens that Ying Po-chüeh had been invited for a drink by Ho Liang-feng, the younger brother of Magnate Ho from Hu-chou, in the establishment of the singing girl, Ho Chin-ch’an, on Fourth Street. When Han Tao-kuo succeeded in tracking him down, he invited him to come outside and have a word with him.

Ying Po-chüeh had been drinking until his face became bright red and was sporting a toothpick in the brim of his hat. Han Tao-kuo bowed to him and then, drawing him aside to a secluded spot, told him, thus and so, what had happened.

“Since such an event has occurred,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “I cannot do otherwise than go with you.”

Thereupon, he said goodbye to Ho Liang-feng and accompanied Han Tao-kuo to his home, where he interrogated him about the details of the affair.

Han Tao-kuo beseeched him, saying, “My only hope is that you will go to His Honor’s residence and ask him to write a note on my behalf. I anticipate that tomorrow morning when they are taken to the district yamen the case will be adjudicated by Magistrate Li Ta-t’ien. If he could only request him to:

Look upon the matter with favorable eyes,[1]

so that my wife is not required to come before the bench, when the affair is over, I will see that you are richly rewarded, and even kowtow to you.”

As he spoke, he knelt down on the ground, but Ying Po-chüeh pulled him up by the hand, saying, “Worthy friend, in such a trifling affair as this, I could scarcely fail to intervene on your behalf. Get a sheet of paper and write out an explanatory note. I’ll accompany you to His Honor’s residence right now and speak to him about it. You should dispense with any idle chatter. Just say, ‘I am frequently away from home, and in my absence this bunch of “bare sticks” from the neighborhood are constantly:

Pitching bricks and tossing tiles,

in order to insult my wife.’ Because your younger brother, Han the Second, couldn’t get over his resentment at this, he got into a brawl with them, only to find himself surrounded by this bunch who dragged him to the ground and started kicking and beating him. As a result, he and your wife now find themselves trussed up together in the subprecinct station. Ask His Honor to write a note to Magistrate Li explaining the situation and urging that your wife not be required to come before the bench. You can be sure that he will prove responsive to such a request and that will be the end of it.”

Han Tao-kuo fetched brush and inkstone, promptly wrote out an explanatory note, and tucked it into his sleeve. Ying Po-chüeh then led him straight to the door of Hsi-men Ch’ing’s residence and asked the gatekeeper, “Is your master at home?”

“The master is in his studio in the flower garden,” P’ing-an replied. “Master Second and Uncle Han, please go right in.”

Ying Po-chüeh was such a regular visitor that even the dog did not attempt to bite him. With Han Tao-kuo in tow, he proceeded through the ceremonial gate, around the main reception hall, and through the vaulted right angle turn in the gallery connecting the gable of the reception hall to the anterooms on the side of the courtyard, straight to the postern gate leading into the garden. Skirting the juniper hedge that ran along either side of the banksia rose arbor, they came to the small three-roomed summerhouse on the other side of the hedge called the Kingfisher Pavilion. This was the place where Hsi-men Ch’ing sought to cool off during the summer months.

In front and behind,
Screens and lattices set each other off;
On all four sides,
Flowers and bamboos are thick and shady.
All the way round are displayed,
Rare birds and exotic animals,[2]
Ultramundane plants and amaranthine blossoms,[3]
Each a perfect specimen of its kind.

The studio consisted of three compartments, one well-lighted parlor, and two less well-lighted inner rooms.

The page boy, Hua-t'ung, who was sweeping the ground outside, announced, "Master Ying the Second and Uncle Han are here."

The two of them lifted aside the blind and stepped into the parlor, where they found Shu-t'ung on duty in the study within.

When he saw that it was Master Ying the Second and Uncle Han, he said, "Please have a seat. Father has just gone back to the rear compound." He then told Hua-t'ung to go and ask him to come out again.

Ying Po-chüeh observed that facing each other on the upper and lower ends of the room were ranged two rows of six low-slung, bow-back, folding armchairs of the type called Tung-p'o chairs,[4] embellished with Yunnan agateware lacquer, gilt nails, and wickerwork rattan seats. On the two side walls were hung four landscape paintings by well-known artists, mounted on ultramarine patterned damask with white satin borders. On one hand there stood a side table, the cabriole legs of which were carved in the shape of a protruding "mantis belly"[5] that tapered down into "dragonfly feet,"[6] and the top of which was inlaid with an oblong, letter-shaped, slab of marble, chosen for its pictorial quality.[7] On this table there was displayed an antique bronze incense burner in the shape of a gilded crane. In the center of the back wall there hung a plaque emblazoned with the three characters for Kingfisher Pavilion, with a pair of framed hanging scrolls suspended to its left and right, on the coated paper of which was inscribed the couplet:

The breeze is tranquil, shadows of locust trees
purify the courtyard;
The day is long, fragrance from an incense burner
suffuses the latticework.

Thereupon, Ying Po-chüeh took a seat in one of the chairs facing the entrance, Han Tao-kuo pulled over a chair and sat down at right angles to him, while Hua-t'ung went back to the rear compound to find Hsi-men Ch'ing.

After some time had passed, Ying Po-chüeh wandered into the inner study, where he found standing on the floor a black lacquer summer bedstead with incised gold ornamentation and a decorative marble panel, and fitted with bed curtains of blue silk. To either side of this there were painted lacquer bookcases adorned with gold tracery, which were filled with the conventional presentation gifts of privately printed books with brocade wrappers and bolts of fabric. There was also a desk, piled high with writing implements and books. Under the green gauze window there stood a black lacquer zither stand and a solitary folding chair inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A letter case was also visible containing Hsi-men Ch'ing's social correspondence, calling cards, and lists of people with whom Mid-autumn Festival gifts had been exchanged.

Picking up the first list, Ying Po-chüeh opened and perused it. He found inscribed there the names of His Honor Ts'ai Ching, His Excellency Ts'ai Yu, Defender-in-chief Chu Mien, Defender-in-chief T'ung Kuan, His Honor Privy Councilor Ts'ai the Fourth,[8] His Honor Commandant Ts'ai the Fifth,[9] as well as the names of the four principal officers from both the local district and prefectural yamens. The second list contained the names of Commandant Chou Hsiu, Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, Military Director-in-chief Ching Chung, Militia Commander Chang Kuan, and the two Eunuch Directors Liu and Hsüeh. The items indicated were bolts of satin brocade, preserved pork, wine, gold-colored pastries, preserved shad, salted seafood, chicken, goose, and other gifts appropriate for major occasions, each gradated differentially according to the status of the recipient.

The two of them continued to wait for their host. But no more of this.

To resume our story, Hua-t'ung went back as far as Chin-lien's quarters and asked, "Sister Ch'un-mei, is Father here?"

"You lousy little slave! You've been seeing things," Ch'un-mei railed at him. "Father's next door at the Sixth Lady's place, isn't he? Why insist on running over here to ask after him?"

Hua-t'ung then went over to the other side, where he found Hsiu-ch'un sitting on the stone stylobate, and asked her in a low voice, "Is Father here? Master Ying the Second and Uncle Han have come and are waiting in the studio to have a word with him."

"Father is here," replied Hsiu-ch'un. "He's watching Mother make some clothes for the baby."

It so happens that Hsi-men Ch'ing had come up with two bolts of material, one of scarlet silk, and one of parrot-green Lu-chou pongee, out of which he had told Li P'ing-erh to make undershirts, cloaks, vests, skullcaps, and the like for Kuan-ko. On the gold-flecked k'ang frame a scarlet strip of felt had been laid down to create a working space for this purpose. The wet nurse was holding the baby on one side, and Ying-ch'un was standing by with an iron in her hand. Whom should they see at this juncture but Hsiu-ch'un, who came in and surreptitiously gave a tug at Ying-ch'un.

"What are you tugging at me for?" demanded Ying-ch'un. "If you're not careful, you'll knock some of the coals from the iron onto the strip of felt."

Li P'ing-erh then asked, "Why are you tugging at her for no good reason?"

"Hua-t'ung says that Master Ying the Second has come," said Hsiu-ch'un, "and would like to have a word with Father."

"You little slave!" said Li P'ing-erh. "If Master Ying the Second has come, you should come in and explain the situation, that's all. *Why* insist on tugging at her?"

"Just ask Master Ying the Second to have a seat," Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Hua-t'ung. "I'll be there in a minute."

Thereupon, he continued to watch the cutting out of the baby things until the task was completed and then went out to the studio in his informal clothes to see Ying Po-chüeh and his companion.

When they had bowed to each other and sat down, with Han Tao-kuo occupying a seat to one side, Hsi-men Ch'ing called Hua-t'ung and told him to bring them some tea. Before long he brought out three cups of tea flavored with candied kumquats in carved lacquer cups with silver teaspoons, and after they had drunk it, he took the cups and their raised saucers away again.

Ying Po-chüeh then started things off by saying, "Brother Han, if you've got anything to say, tell His Honor what it is."

"If you've got something to say, speak up," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Han Tao-kuo was about to say, "There is a bunch of ruffians in my neighborhood, whose names are unknown to me," when he was interrupted by Ying Po-chüeh, who said, "Worthy friend, that's not the way to go about it. It won't do to.

Conceal the bones in your mouth and
merely expose the flesh.

In front of His Honor your employer here, you would do better to:

Open up the back door and speak right out.

Brother Han often has to spend the night at the shop, which means that there is no one left at home but his wife and their child. In his neighborhood there are a number of persons who are:

Neither fish nor fowl,

who, seeing that there is no man in the house, are constantly:

Pitching bricks and tossing tiles,

driving her crazy with their tricks and insults. His younger brother, Han the Second, being fed up with this behavior, gave them a piece of his mind when he came to visit, only to find himself set upon by this bunch of 'bare sticks' who:

Without permitting any further explanation,

surrounded him and beat him to a stinking pulp. Right now, his brother and his wife have both been trussed up and taken to the subprecinct station. Tomorrow morning they'll be escorted from

there to the township station and the district yamen and brought before the presiding magistrate, His Honor Li Ta-t'ien.

"Weeping and wailing, he has come and respectfully begged me to ask you to write a note on his behalf, and send someone to speak to Magistrate Li about it, requesting that he:

Look upon the matter with favorable eyes.

If his brother has to be arraigned, that will not matter too much, so long as his wife is not required to appear before the bench."

He then went on to say, "Get out that explanatory note of yours, and show it to His Honor, so that he can send someone to take care of it for you."

Han Tao-kuo then reached into his sleeve, pulled out the note, and hastily getting down on his knees, said, "Unworthy as I am, your humble servant has been the recipient of your patronage. My only hope is that Your Honor, out of consideration for Uncle Ying the Second, will deign to show me some consideration in this matter. Should you do so, my entire family will be:

Unable to forget your kindness
as long as we live."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was so affected by this speech that he pulled him up by one hand, saying, "Please get up."

Thereupon, glancing at the note, which read, "Please look with favor on the female defendant, nee Wang, and exempt her from the obligation to appear before the bench," Hsi-men Ch'ing said, "This note ought not to be worded this way. You should refer only to your younger brother, Han the Second, and leave it at that."

Then, turning to Ying Po-chüeh, he said, "Rather than my addressing a note to the district yamen, it would be better to instruct the local constable to alter his report so that tomorrow the case will be dealt with in my yamen instead."

"Brother Han," exclaimed Ying Po-chüeh, "You should make an obeisance to His Honor. This way of handling it is better yet."

Han Tao-kuo once again knelt down and kowtowed.

Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Tai-an, "You go outside immediately and call in one of the foremen on duty there."

Before long an adjutant in black livery was called in and stood to one side awaiting orders.

Hsi-men Ch'ing told him to step forward and instructed him, "You go to the residence of Manager Han on Oxhide Street, find the local constable of the relevant neighborhood subprecinct station, and have him speak to the neighborhood head of the relevant mutual security unit. You can say that it is my personal directive that he should release the defendant, nee Wang, immediately; ascertain the names of the 'bare sticks' involved; and alter the report so that tomorrow morning the case will be brought before my yamen, the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, for adjudication."

The adjutant assented to the orders he had received and went out the gate.

"Brother Han," said Ying Po-chüeh, "you might as well go along with him and take care of your business. I still have a few words to say to His Honor."

Han Tao-kuo took his leave, with:

A thousand thanks and ten thousand
expressions of gratitude,

and accompanied the adjutant to Oxhide Street to convey his orders.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then sat down to keep Ying Po-chüeh company in the Kingfisher Pavilion. Ordering Tai-an to set up a table, he said to him, "Go back to the rear compound and tell the First Lady to open and decant some of that osmanthus-flavored lotus blossom wine that Eunuch Director Liu of the Imperial Brickyard sent us the other day. I'd like to share it with Uncle Ying the Second. And have some of that preserved shad in fermented mash steamed for us as well."

Po-chüeh raised his hand at this point and said, "I still haven't thanked you, Brother, for the two fine shad that you were kind enough to send me the other day. I gave one of them to my elder brother and said to my wife, with regard to the other, 'Cut it in two with a cleaver, and send a piece to our daughter. As for what's left over, chop it into thin slices, marinate it in the red mash it came in, mix in a little sesame seed oil, and store it in a porcelain jar, so that,

early or late, when we're having a meal, or if a guest should show up, we can steam a saucerful for our delectation, thereby not failing in our appreciation of Brother's lavish generosity.' "

Hsi-men Ch'ing told him, "Eunuch Director Liu's younger brother, Company Commander Liu, because he has made a good thing for himself out of the management of the Imperial Reed Beds below the river, has recently bought himself an estate at Wu-li Tien and appropriated timber from the Imperial Lumber Depot to build a house on it. Recently this matter was brought before our yamen, and my colleague Hsia Yen-ling, despite having accepted a bribe of one hundred taels of silver, threatened to memorialize about the case and forward the records to the Ministry of Justice in the capital. This threw Eunuch Director Liu into such a panic that he came to me in person, with a hundred taels of silver in hand, and begged me repeatedly to do what I could to quash the case. There's no reason for me to deceive you. I make enough at my business concerns not to have to worry about getting by, so that sort of money means nothing to me. Moreover, Eunuch Director Liu is a long-standing friend of mine, from whom I have often received gifts, so I could scarcely afford to lose face over such a trifling affair. Thus I refused to accept anything from him, simply telling him to see that the house in question was torn down overnight. When the case came before the bench, I merely had Company Commander Liu's servant, Liu the Third, given twenty strokes of the bamboo, and thereby disposed of the matter.

"When the affair was concluded, Eunuch Director Liu could not get over his feelings of gratitude at my consideration, so he slaughtered a pig and came in person to present it to me, along with a jug of homemade lotus blossom wine, two packages of preserved shad weighing forty catties, and two bolts of figured satin brocade.

It redounds to the credit of both of us,
that we were able to exchange favors this way. What need was there for money?"

"Brother," said Ying Po-chüeh, "Money may not mean anything to you, but His Honor Hsia Yen-ling started life in the ranks, so that

from the time he:

Put down roots and stood up straight,

he's had to do without it. If he doesn't grab some for himself when the opportunity offers, what is he to live on? Brother, since taking office you must have heard quite a few cases with him."

"Great and small, I have heard quite a few cases with him," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "As for the rest, everything is fine enough; the only trouble is:

His greed and avarice know no bounds.

When cases come before him, without so much as enquiring into the:

Blue or red, black or white,

of the situation, if money comes into his hands, he frees the parties concerned. What sort of justice is that? I have consequently balked at his proposals more than once and refused to go along with him. After all, although we are both only military officials, we are charged with the administration of justice and ought to have some regard for appearances."

Before he had finished speaking, wine and delicacies were laid before them. First there were four saucers of hors d'oeuvres, after which another four dishes of cold appetizers were served to go with the wine, consisting of fresh red T'ai-chou duck eggs, crescent-shaped golden prawns from Liao-tung on a bed of julienned cucumber, fragrant deep-fried pork ribs, and plump dry-steamed pieces of split sun-dried chicken. The second course consisted of four more dishes of hot appetizers: a bowl of roast duck steamed in its own juice, a bowl of jellied pig's trotters, a bowl of braised pork, and a bowl of quick-fried pork kidneys. Only after that, on a porcelain platter decorated with a blue and white pattern both inside and out, was there served up a whole red and savory steamed preserved shad, with a bewitching aroma.

It melted on entering the mouth,

Even its bones were fragrant.

Hsi-men Ch'ing poured the lotus blossom wine into gold cups in the shape of chrysanthemum blossoms and kept Ying Po-chüeh

company as they enjoyed their repast. But we will say no more about how the two of them sat together and chatted for more than two hours before breaking up.

To resume our story, the bunch of young scamps concerned in the affair, on observing that an adjutant in black livery had shown up at the subprecinct station and effected the release of the woman, nee Wang, who was allowed to go home; had interrogated the neighborhood head of the relevant mutual security unit in order to ascertain the names of the parties involved; and had directed that the next morning they were all to be escorted to the local office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission for a hearing; could only:

Gaze at each other in consternation.[10]

It dawned on them that Han Tao-kuo was a manager in the employ of Hsi-men Ch'ing and must have asked his master to put in the fix on his behalf, with the result that Han the Second was now the only person in custody at the subprecinct station.

With one voice they exclaimed, "This matter has taken a turn for the worse."

Han Tao-kuo had slipped five mace of silver to the adjutant, who promptly saw to it that the head of the relevant mutual security unit wrote down the names of the parties involved and sent them to Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence, preparatory to their being haled into court the following morning.

The next day the two officials, Hsi-men Ch'ing and Judicial Commissioner Hsia, went to the yamen and took their places on the bench, while the local constable and the neighborhood head of the relevant mutual security unit delivered their charges to the court. The first party brought forward was Han the Second, who knelt down before the bench. Judicial Commissioner Hsia first perused the report, which read:

> The resident of Oxhide Street and neighborhood head of the fourth neighborhood of the first subprecinct of Ch'ing-ho, Hsiao Ch'eng, reports a case of disturbance of the peace in the said neighborhood. The first party involved is called Han the Second;

the second is Ch'e Tan, or Hogwash Ch'e; the third is Kuan Shih-k'uan, or Busybody Kuan; the fourth is Yu Shou, or Loafer Yu; and the fifth is Hao Hsien, or Idler Hao.

All of these persons were then called on to come forward and sign their names, after which the magistrate asked Han the Second, "What is this all about?"

"My elder brother is engaged in commerce," said Han the Second, "which often requires him to be away from home. He and his wife are a young couple and have consequently been taken advantage of during his absence by this bunch of 'bare sticks' from the neighborhood, who are constantly strumming guitars and ukuleles, gathering on her doorstep to sing:

Suggestive songs and lewd tunes,

pitching bricks over the wall at night, and insulting her in every way. I live apart from my brother's family, but when I came by his house and saw what was going on, I was unwilling to put up with it and gave them a piece of my mind, as a result of which this bunch of 'bare sticks,' like a pack of tigers:

Without permitting any further explanation,

dragged me down to the ground and started kicking and beating me. Now that I have been brought before Your Honor's bench, I hope Your Honor will look into the matter."

Addressing himself to the other parties in the case, Judicial Commissioner Hsia then asked, "And what is your story?"

As though with one voice, that group of individuals responded, "Your Honor, don't allow yourself to be taken in by his specious testimony. He's nothing but a gambler and trickster who has been taking advantage of his brother's absence from home to carry on an affair with his sister-in-law, nee Wang; while she, for her part, has displayed the brazen audacity to vilely abuse her neighbors. Yesterday we caught them in the act, and we have her underpants to present as evidence."

Judicial Commissioner Hsia then asked the neighborhood head, Hsiao Ch'eng, "Why is the woman, nee Wang, not here in court?"

Hsiao Ch'eng did not feel that it would be appropriate to say that the adjutant had released her, so he simply said, "Her feet are small, so she has trouble walking on the street. She'll be here soon enough."

Han the Second, from his position beneath the bench, merely fixed his two eyes on Hsi-men Ch'ing.

After some time, Hsi-men Ch'ing inclined his body in Judicial Commissioner Hsia's direction and said, "My senior colleague, it seems unnecessary to arraign the woman, nee Wang. It is probable that she is rather good-looking, and that when she refused to respond to the propositions of these 'bare sticks,' they have retaliated by concocting this trap for her."

He then called for their leader, Ch'e Tan, to come forward and asked him, "Where was it that you apprehended this Han the Second?"

"It was yesterday, in her house, that we apprehended them," the group replied.

He then went on to ask Han the Second, "What is the woman nee Wang's relationship to you?"

The neighborhood head replied, "She is his sister-in-law."

He then continued to question the neighborhood head, saying, "And how did this bunch of people get into her house?"

"They got in by climbing over the wall," the neighborhood head responded.

Hsi-men Ch'ing became very angry and upbraided them, saying, "What is to be done with a bunch of 'bare sticks' like you! Since he is her brother-in-law, the woman, nee Wang, falls within the scope of his five mourning relationships[11] as defined by law, so what objection can there be to his frequenting her home? As for the likes of this bunch of 'bare sticks,' what is your relationship to her? How dare you enter her house by climbing over the wall? Moreover, you did so while her husband was away from home, and she had only a young daughter in the house. Whatever you had in mind:

If it was not seduction, it must have been robbery."[12]

Then he shouted to the attendants, “Bring out the ankle-squeezers. Give each of them a squeezing and then administer twenty strokes of the heavy bamboo.”

They were beaten until:

The skin was broken, the flesh was split, and
Fresh blood spurted out.[13]

Moreover, the four or five of them were all young scamps who:

From the time they left their mothers’ wombs,
Had never undergone judicial punishment,

so that in every case, as a result of the beating:

Their cries shook the heavens, and
Their groans filled the courtroom.

Hsi-men Ch’ing, without waiting for Judicial Commissioner Hsia to open his mouth, ordered, “Han the Second is to leave the court and await the further disposition of the case. The other four are to be incarcerated until such time as their depositions can be taken and they can be escorted to a higher court to stand trial.”

When the four of them found themselves in jail, they engaged in mutual recriminations, each of them feeling as though he were:

Carrying a spectral fetus.

The other prisoners in the jail further intimidated them by saying, “If the four of you are escorted to a higher court to stand trial, you will be sentenced to penal servitude, and if you are exiled to some faraway prefecture, subprefecture, or district it will be the death of you.”

The whole bunch of them were in a state of panic, and as soon as the servants from their families showed up to deliver food to them, they each sent letters home instructing their fathers and elder brothers to spend money both high and low in order to pull whatever strings they could.

Among these there was one who approached Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, who responded, “The husband of this woman, nee Wang, is a manager employed by His Honor Hsi-men Ch’ing. As long as he remains adamant about this matter, insisting that they be escorted to a higher court to stand trial, since he is a

colleague of mine, there is not much I can do about it. You had better find some way of pulling strings with him if you want a favorable outcome."

There were also those who induced Hsi-men Ch'ing's brother-in-law, Wu K'ai, to intervene in the matter, but without result. Everyone was aware that Hsi-men Ch'ing's household had money to spare, so they felt it would be futile to offer him anything directly.

At this point, the fathers and elder brothers of the four families involved were in a state of panic and held a conference together, at which one of them said, "There's no point in another approach to Battalion Commander Wu since he has already turned us down. But I've heard it said that Ying the Second, the Younger brother of that Ying the Elder who has a silk goods store on East Street, is thick with him. The best thing to do is for each of us to ante up some silver, enough to come to several tens of taels altogether, and then seal it up and offer it to Ying the Second. If he can be persuaded to intervene on our behalf, the outcome is bound to be auspicious."

Thereupon, the fathers and elder brothers of the families involved, with Ch'e Tan's father, Old Man Ch'e, the proprietor of a local wineshop, at their head, each came up with ten taels of silver, making the sum of forty taels in all. They then proceeded as a group to Ying Po-chüeh's house to beg him to intervene with Hsi-men Ch'ing. Ying Po-chüeh agreed to accept the money and sent them on their way.

His wife then said to him, "Since you've already come to the aid of Manager Han by helping to land this bunch of scamps in their present predicament, how can you now turn around and accept this money to speak up on their behalf without antagonizing Manager Han?"

"Of course, it's going to be an awkward business," said Ying Po-chüeh. "To start with, thus and so, I'll take fifteen taels of silver and surreptitiously present it to Shu-t'ung, the page boy in charge of his studio, asking him to exercise his ingenuity in broaching this matter with his master. You don't know the extent to which His Honor

depends on him in matters great and small, taking everything he says seriously. I guarantee he'll:

Hit the bull's-eye with the first arrow."

Thereupon, having weighed out fifteen taels worth of silver, wrapped it up, and tucked it into his sleeve, he headed straight for Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence. Hsi-men Ch'ing had not yet returned home. Ying Po-chüeh proceeded as far as the reception hall when he saw Shu-t'ung coming out of the studio on the west side of the courtyard. On his head he wore a "tile-ridge" hat, and the two tufts of his hair were bound into knots with jet satin ribbons and sported gold-headed pins in the shape of lotus blossoms. On his body he wore a long gown of Su-chou chiffon, a jade-colored silk tunic, sandals, and white socks.

"Master Second," he said, "please have a seat in the parlor."

He then ordered Hua-t'ung to go to the rear compound and fetch some tea, saying, "Page boy, I'm sending you to fetch some tea for Master Ying the Second, but instead of getting a move on, you're continuing to fool around. Just wait until Father comes home and see if I tell him about it or not."

Only then did the page boy set off to fetch the tea.

"It looks as though he's not back from the yamen yet, is he?" Ying Po-chüeh then asked.

"Just now one of his attendants came by," replied Shu-t'ung, "to say that the court session is already over, but that he and His Honor Hsia have gone outside the South Gate to pay a social call together. Master Second, what is it that you have to say to him?' "

"It's nothing in particular," said Ying Po-chüeh.

"With regard to that matter concerning Manager Han that you spoke to him about the other day," said Shu-t'ung, "Father went to the yamen yesterday and had that bunch of scamps beaten and incarcerated. Tomorrow he is going to draft the necessary documents and have the defendants escorted to a higher court to stand trial."

Drawing him aside to a secluded spot, Ying Po-chüeh said to him, "Right now a further complication has arisen. The relatives of that

bunch of scamps, thus and so, on hearing the proposal that they be escorted to a higher court to stand trial, have all become fearful about the situation. Last night they came to my home, weeping and wailing, and begged me repeatedly, on bended knee, to speak to your master on their behalf. I thought to myself, 'since I have already spoken to him previously on Manager Han's behalf, how can I very well intervene on their side without antagonizing Manager Han?' I had no alternative but to tell the four families to come up with fifteen taels of silver and ask you to exercise your ingenuity in broaching the subject with your master, to see if there is any way he might see his way clear to letting them off the hook."

As he finished speaking, he reached into his sleeve, pulled out the silver, and handed it to Shu-t'ung.

Shu-t'ung unwrapped it, saw that it consisted of four ingots of varying sizes along with four smaller pieces, and said, "As long as it's for your sake, Master Second, you can tell them that if they come up with another five taels I will undertake to speak on their behalf, but I don't know whether Father will agree to their request or not. Last night his brother-in-law, Wu K'ai, came in person to speak to him about this matter, and he refused to agree. As for me:

With the visage of a flea,
How much face have I got?[14]

To tell you the truth, Master Second, this silver must take care of more than myself. I'll have to spend a little something to enlist the services of the Sixth Lady, the one who has borne him a son. Only if I approach him in this roundabout way will there be any hope of success."

"If that's the way it is," said Ying Po-chüeh, "I'll explain the situation to them. Whatever you do, put your heart into it. They'll be coming for an answer later this afternoon."

"I don't know when Father will get home," said Shu-t'ung. "You'd better tell them to come back tomorrow morning."

When they had finished speaking, Ying Po-chüeh made his departure.

Shu-t'ung took the silver into the shop, chiseled off a piece worth one tael and five mace, and sent someone out to buy a jug of Chin-hua wine, two roast ducks, two chickens, one mace worth of fresh fish, a leg of pork, two mace worth of stuffed cream puff pastries, and one mace worth of fruit-flavored sweet rolls. Then he carried these ingredients to Lai-hsing's quarters and asked his wife, Hui-hsiu, to prepare them for him, so they would be ready to be served.

That particular day it so happened that P'an Chin-lien was not at home. Early in the morning she had taken a sedan chair to Old Mrs. P'an's place outside the South Gate in order to celebrate her mother's birthday. Shu-t'ung directed Hua-t'ung to put the delicacies he had provided into square boxes and deliver them to Li P'ing-erh's quarters. Only after he had done so did he plan to pick up the jug of Chin-hua wine and go inside himself.

"Where did all this come from?" Li P'ing-erh asked.

"It's Brother Shu-t'ung's way of showing his respect for you," Hua-t'ung replied.

"The lousy jailbird!" laughed Li P'ing-erh. "Why should he be showing any respect to me?"

After a while, Shu-t'ung came in and saw Li P'ing-erh seated on the gilt lacquer frame of the k'ang, extending her jade wrists, the color of snowy lotus root and encircled by gilded bracelets, in the effort to induce a tortoiseshell cat to play with Kuan-ko.

"You lousy jailbird!" she said. "For whom have you provided all these goodies here?"

Shu-t'ung merely smiled.

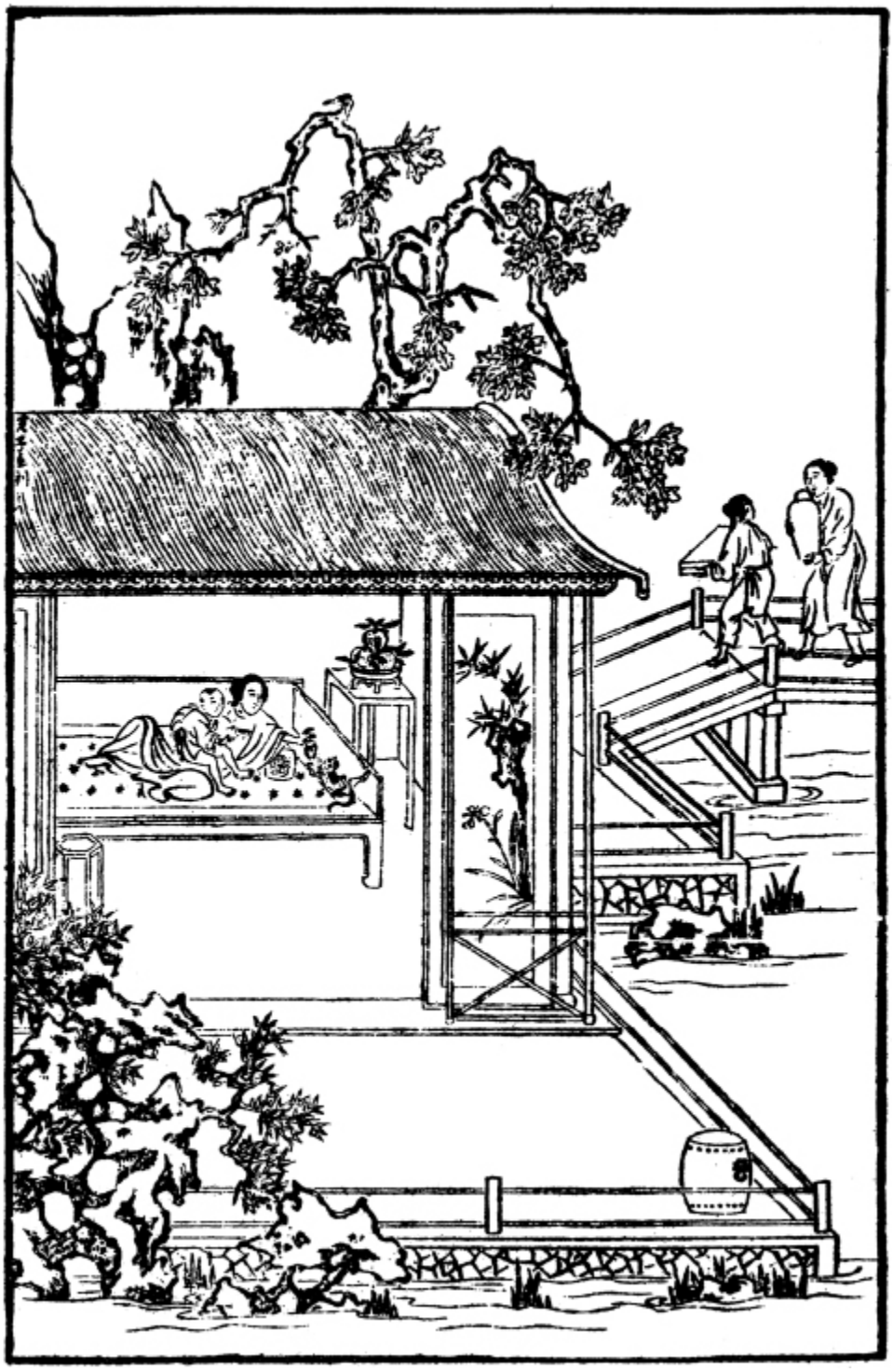
"What do you mean," asked Li P'ing-erh, "by not saying a word and merely smiling that way?"

"To whom should I show respect," Shu-t'ung replied, "if not to you?"

"You lousy jailbird!" said Li P'ing-erh. 'Why should you appear to go to such pains for no good reason only to show respect for me? Unless you explain yourself, I'll refuse to eat any of it. As the saying goes:

The superior man does not eat food of unknown origin."

Shu-t’ung opened the jug of wine, arrayed the delicacies on a small table, told Ying-ch’un to decant the wine into a silver flagon, poured some of it into a cup, and offered it up to her with both hands.



Getting down on his knees, he said, "Only after you have drunk this cup will I explain things to you."

"What is this all about?" demanded Li P'ing-erh. "Only after you have explained it to me will I eat anything of yours. If you refuse to explain it, you can kneel to me for a hundred years and I still won't eat anything."

"You can stand up to explain it," she added.

Shu-t'ung then gave her a complete account from the beginning of Ying Po-chüeh's request on behalf of the four defendants.

"Since he had initially intervened on behalf of Manager Han," he explained, "he felt awkward about speaking up for the other side, so he asked me to present his petition to you first. If Father questions you about it, don't tell him I had anything to do with it. Just pretend that your brother-in-law, Hua Tzu-yu, sent someone to speak to you about it. I've written out a note in the front studio, which I will say that you gave me, with instructions to show it to him. If you will just put in a good word while he's in your room, that ought to do it. Moreover, the other day, Father has already given them'a taste of the bamboo for their sins. If he can be induced to settle the case by letting them go free, it would be a truly momentous good deed."

"So that's what it's all about," laughed Li P'ing-erh. It's no big deal. As soon as your father comes home I'll speak to him. That's all there is to it. What made you think you had to prepare all these goodies for no good reason?"

"You lousy jailbird!" she went on to say. "No doubt you made him pay dearly for your services."

"There's no reason for me to deceive you," said Shu-t'ung. "He gave me five taels of silver for my pains."

"You lousy jailbird!" said Li P'ing-erh. "You're becoming quite an expert at:

Setting people up and shaking them down."

Thereupon, instead of using small cups, she told Ying-ch'un to fetch a pair of large goblets of chased silver. After drinking off two goblets herself, she poured another gobletful and presented it to Shu-t'ung.

"I don't dare drink anything," Shu-t'ung said, "or my face will get red, and Father will notice it."

"I'm bestowing it on you," said Li P'ing-erh. "What is there to be afraid of?"

Thereupon, he kowtowed to her, stood up, and drank it off with one gulp. Li P'ing-erh picked out a sampling of each of the delicacies and put them on a saucer for him to eat. The page boy kept her company by draining two large goblets in succession, after which, fearing that his face would turn red, he dared not drink any more but took his leave and went out to the shop at the front of the compound.

Half of the sweetmeats and delicacies he had bought were left over and he laid them out on the counter, along with two flagons of wine, and invited Manager Fu, Pen the Fourth, Ch'en Ching-chi, Lai-hsing, and Tai-an to share them with him. The bunch of them fell to and polished everything off in no time, like:

A gust of wind sweeping away vestiges of clouds.[15]

But he forgot to invite P'ing-an to join them.

P'ing-an just sat at his post at the main gate, pouting with his lips. Who could have anticipated that Hsi-men Ch'ing would arrive home from the social call he had been paying outside the South Gate early that afternoon. P'ing-an saw him coming but did not say anything to warn of his arrival. When Shu-t'ung heard the sound of his escorts shouting to clear the way, he was so flustered he did not have time to clear up the mess but raced to the reception hall in two or three strides in order to take charge of Hsi-men Ch'ing's formal clothes.

"Has anyone been here today?" Hsi-men Ch'ing asked him.

"No one has been here," Shu-t'ung replied.

Hsi-men Ch'ing took off his formal clothes, doffed his official headgear, exchanging it for a cap and headband, and then went into

the studio and sat down. Shu-t'ung fetched a cup of tea and served it to him. Hsi-men Ch'ing drank a mouthful and then set the teacup down again.

Noticing that his face was red, he asked him, "Where've you been drinking wine?"

Shu-t'ung then pulled out a note from under the inkstone on the table and handed it to Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "This is a note that the Sixth Lady called me into her room to give me. It has something to do with Ch'e Tan and that bunch and was sent over here by her brother-in-law, Hua Tzu-yu. The Sixth Lady told me to take it with me in order to show to you. Because she bestowed a cup of wine on me, I guess my face must be red."

Hsi-men Ch'ing glanced at the note, which said, "Please look with favor on the four offenders Ch'e Tan and company"; and then, having read it, he handed it to Shu-t'ung and instructed him, "Put it in my letter case and have the officer on duty remind me about it in the yamen tomorrow."

Shu-t'ung put the note in the letter case and then came over and stood in attendance at his side. When Hsi-men Ch'ing observed that after a few drinks the colors red and white formed a pleasing contrast on his face and the fragrant redness of his lips revealed a mouthful of teeth as white as glutinous rice, how could he have been anything but captivated. Thereupon his:

Lecherous desires were suddenly aroused.

Taking him onto his lap, the two of them fell to kissing and sucking each other's tongues. The young man had a cinnamon-flavored breath-sweetening lozenge in his mouth, and his whole person exuded a pungent fragrance. Hsi-men Ch'ing hiked up his clothes with one hand, took down his flowered drawers, and began to fondle his buttocks.

As he did so, he enjoined him, "You shouldn't drink too much wine, or you'll spoil that face of yours."

"Your instructions are duly noted," said Shu-t'ung.

The two of them then continued to carry on with each other in the study.

To resume our story, a figure, clad in black and riding a horse, arrived at the main gate of the compound, leapt off his horse, and, bowing to P'ing-an, who was tending the gate, asked him, "Is this the residence of His Honor Hsi-men, the judicial commissioner?"

Now P'ing-an was still pouting over the fact that Shu-t'ung had failed to invite him to partake of his treat and was not in the best of moods, so he did not reply for some time.

The man continued to stand there and said, "I have been sent by Commandant Chou Hsiu of the Regional Military Command to deliver a circular announcement to His Honor Hsi-men. Tomorrow he is throwing a party at the Temple of Eternal Felicity in order to see off His Honor Hsü Nan-ch'i, who has been promoted to the post of commander of the Hsin-p'ing Stockade. Their Honors Military Director-in-chief Ching Chung, Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, and Militia Commander Chang Kuan will also be there. Contributions of one tael apiece have already been received from them. I have come straight here to deliver this communication. Might I trouble you, as his gate tender, to pass it on to him? I will wait for an answer."

Only then did P'ing-an take the circular notice and go back to the rear compound, where he learned that Hsi-men Ch'ing was in his studio in the flower garden. Proceeding in that direction, he had just skirted the juniper hedge when he caught sight of Hua-t'ung, who was sitting on the stone stylobate outside the window. When the latter saw him, he gave a negative wave of his hand, and P'ing-an realized that Hsi-men Ch'ing must be engaged in some less than pressing business with Shu-t'ung. Silently approaching the window, he had been eavesdropping for some time when he heard the sound of heavy breathing coming from inside, accompanied by a creaking of the floorboards that was quite audible.

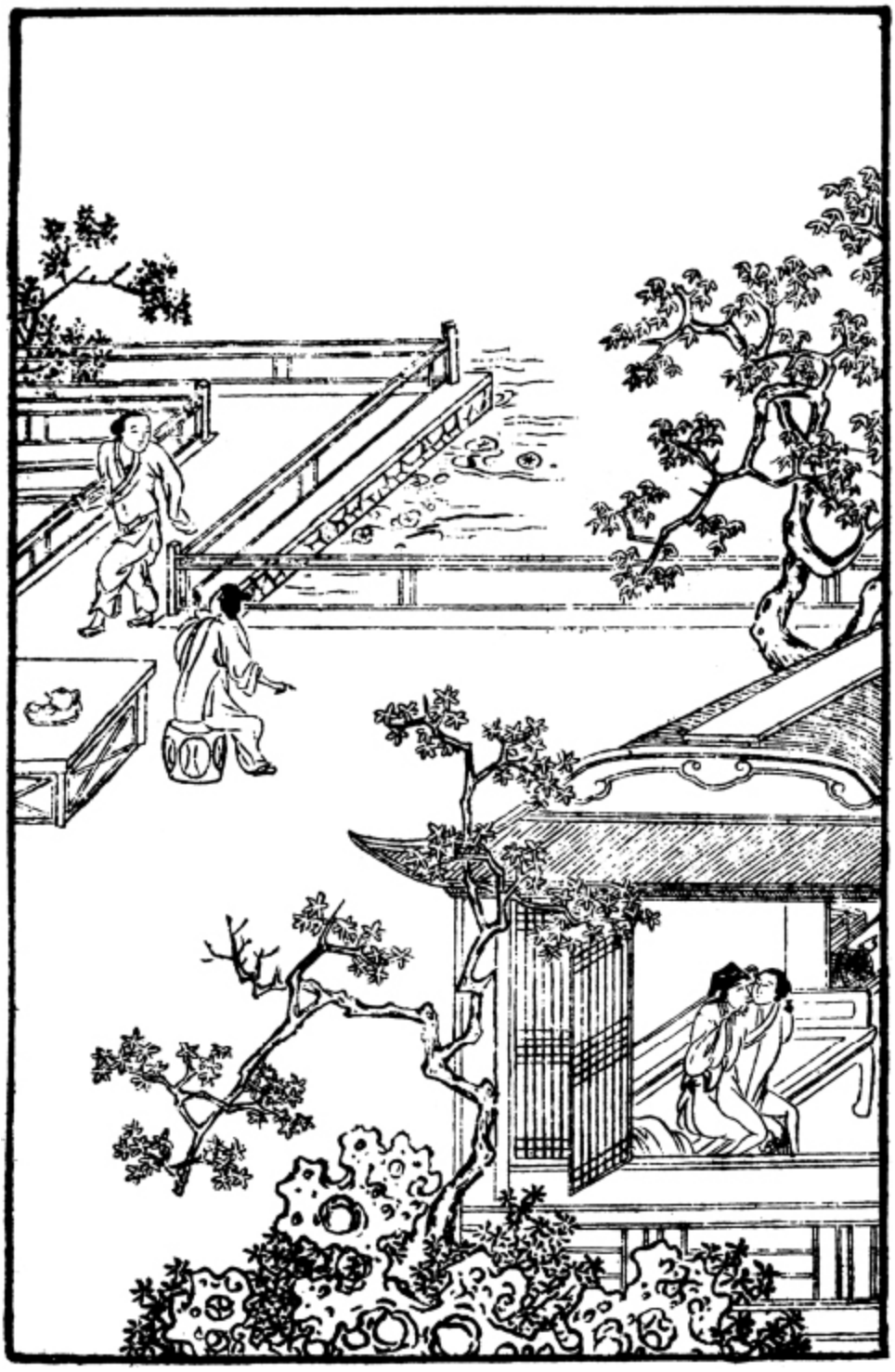
"My child," he overheard Hsi-men Ch'ing say, "hold your body straight, and don't move."

After that, some time elapsed without his hearing anything, when what should he see but Shu-t'ung coming out to fetch some water so Hsi-men Ch'ing could wash his hands. When he caught sight of

P’ing-an and Hua-t’ung standing under the window, his face turned crimson with embarrassment, and he hurried off to the rear compound to complete his errand.

P’ing-an took the circular announcement and went inside, where Hsi-men Ch’ing read it, took up a brush, and wrote “noted” in the appropriate place; after which he instructed him, “Go to the rear compound and ask the Second Lady for a tael of silver. Then get my son-in-law to seal it up and give it to the messenger.”

P’ing-an assented and went on his way.



Induced by a Bribe Shu-t’ung Uses His Charms to Make a Point

When Shu-t’ung came back with the water, Hsi-men Ch’ing washed his hands and then went back to Li P’ing-erh’s quarters.

“Would you like some wine?” Li P’ing-erh asked. “I’ll have a maidservant decant some for you.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing, noticing that there was a jug of Chin-hua wine under the table, asked, “Where did that come from?”

Li P’ing-erh did not feel comfortable explaining that Shu-t’ung had bought it in order to present to her, so she merely said, “I felt like having some wine a while ago and consequently sent a servant out onto the street to buy this jug of wine for me. After opening it, I only drank two cups before I had had enough.”

“Ai-ya!” exclaimed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “I’ve laid in plenty of wine in the front compound, and you go spending silver on it. Just the other day, I purchased a consignment of forty jugs of Ho-ch’ing wine on credit from Ting the Southerner, which is sitting in an anteroom on the western side of the front courtyard. If you want anything to drink, just send a servant after the key and have him go get some for you.”

When he had finished speaking, Li P’ing-erh remembered that she still had a saucer of roast duck, a saucer of chicken meat, and a saucer of fresh fish that had not been touched left over from the earlier repast, so she instructed Ying-ch’un to make them into four saucers of appetizers, with the addition of a saucerful of sliced smoked pork, and set up a table in her room so she could have a drink with Hsi-men Ch’ing. Hsi-men Ch’ing did not ask where these delicacies had come from. It is apparent that he was so accustomed to eating this kind of fare, whether enjoying it at home or entertaining guests, that he did not go a single day without it.

While he was drinking, Hsi-men Ch’ing bethought himself to ask Li P’ing-erh, “Was that note that Shu-t’ung handed me just now given to him by you?”

“It’s from my brother-in-law, Hua Tzu-yu, from outside the gate,” replied Li P’ing-erh. “He sent someone over with it to try to persuade you to be lenient with that bunch of scamps.”

“Just the other day my brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, spoke to me about it,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “but I refused his suggestion. If it weren’t for this, I would certainly have insisted on that bunch of

‘bare sticks’ being escorted to a higher court to stand trial. Out of consideration for your brother-in-law, however, when I go to the yamen tomorrow, I’ll just have each of them given a beating and then let them go.”

“What need is there to beat them again?” said Li P’ing-erh. “When people are beaten into:

Showing their teeth and making faces,

it’s not a pleasant sight.”

“Our yamen is that kind of yamen,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “It makes no difference to me whether people show their teeth or not, as persons more delicate and pampered than they have found out before now.

“The other day we heard a case in the yamen concerning the family of the deceased Vice Commissioner Ch’en from our district. Since Vice Commissioner Ch’en died, his wife has maintained her widowhood. She has a daughter, Miss Ch’en, who was standing at the front door to see the lanterns on the sixteenth of the first month when a young scamp named Juan the Third, who lived across the street from her, was setting off firecrackers and happened to notice how pretty she looked. This inspired him to flirt with her by strumming his guitar or *p’i-p’a*, and serenading her in song. When Miss Ch’en heard this, her forbidden desires were stirred and she sent her maidservant to surreptitiously summon him to her door, where the two of them exchanged a kiss. But after that there was no way for them to meet.

“Who could have anticipated that Juan the Third would become so lovesick that he was bedridden for five months. His father and mother lavished money widely on physicians to treat him, but he gradually approached the brink of death until he was expected to die at any moment.

“At this point, a friend of his named Chou the Second came up with a plan and said to him, ‘Every year at the time of the Middle Primordial Festival[16] on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the mother and daughter of the Ch’en household go to Nun Hsüeh’s place at the Ksitigarbha Nunnery to burn incense during the

Ullambana services. If you promise ten taels of silver to Nun Hsüeh, and she consents to conceal you in her monastic quarters so that you can have a tryst with the young lady, I am sure that it will cure you of what ails you.'

"Juan the Third was delighted by this and actually adopted his proposal. Nun Hsüeh accepted his ten taels of silver with the result that, as the young lady could scarcely have anticipated, while taking a noonday nap in the abbess's quarters, she ended up having illicit relations with Juan the Third. The latter had just arisen from his sickbed, however, where he had long been given to licentious thoughts, and when his desires were suddenly fulfilled in this way, he died on top of the young woman's body.

"This threw her mother into a panic, and she hurriedly took her daughter back home, but Juan the Third's parents were scarcely willing to leave it at that[17] and lodged a complaint before the yamen, with the result that both Mrs. Ch'en and her daughter were taken into custody.

"Hsia Yen-ling, knowing that the Ch'en family was well-to-do, wanted to charge the daughter with the crime, but I refused to go along with him, saying, 'Although it is true that Miss Ch'en had illicit relations with Juan the Third, the latter had long been hankering after her without result and, moreover, had not fully recovered from his illness. Under the circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that such a sudden indulgence in illicit relations should have proven to be fatal. Nun Hsüeh falsely employed, as she should not have done, a Buddhist ceremony as a means of covering up an illicit assignation that resulted in the loss of life; and, moreover, she received a bribe for so doing.'

"She was, therefore, condemned as an accessory before the fact, stripped of her clothing, given twenty strokes of the bamboo, and ordered to return to lay life. The girl's mother, nee Chang, took her daughter, as she should not have done, to a Buddhist temple to burn incense, which is detrimental to public morals. She and her daughter, therefore, were both subjected to the finger squeezers, which were struck twenty times, after which their depositions were

taken and they were released. If it had not been handled in this way, and the case had been forwarded to Tung-p'ing prefecture, the girl would certainly have forfeited her life."[18]

"That was a truly momentous good deed on your part," said Li P'ing-erh. "As long as you are an officer in the legal system, you ought, whenever you can, to utilize your position in the court to treat people favorably. If for no other reason, it would serve to accumulate merit for this little bit of a child of yours."

"What would you suggest?" asked Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Quite aside from anything else," said Li P'ing-erh, "it must have been very hard on that young lady. How could her delicate little fingers ever have withstood such treatment without being hurt?"

"She was hurt so badly that the fingers of her two hands were streaming with blood," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"In the future," said Li P'ing-erh, "you ought to subject people to the squeezers and the bamboo more sparingly.

Where you can afford to be lenient,
you should be lenient.
There are opportunities to accumulate
good fortune everywhere."[19]

"One can't afford to take feelings into account in the conduct of public affairs," pronounced Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Just as the two of them were drinking together there, whom should they see but Ch'un-mei, who lifted aside the portiere and came into the room.

On seeing that Hsi-men Ch'ing and Li P'ing-erh were drinking together, thigh over thigh, she said, "The two of you are doing just as you please, having a good time and drinking wine. Late as it is, you haven't thought to send a servant out to meet my mistress. Lai-an is the only one accompanying her sedan chair.

What with all the intervening gates and doors,
I'm afraid she may be late, but you don't seem to care about it."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw that:

Her flowery headdress was in disarray,[20] and

Her clouds of hair were in disorder,

his whole face became wreathed in smiles, and he said, “Little oily mouth! My guess would be that you’ve been sleeping.”

“The drawnwork kerchief on your head has jumped out of place,” remarked Li P’ing-erh. “Why don’t you pull it back down where it belongs?”

Then, offering it to her as she spoke, she said, “Here’s some good, sweet Chin-hua wine. Won’t you have a cup?”

“Have some,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “and I’ll send a servant to meet your mistress.”

Leaning on the end of the table with one hand while she fiddled with her shoe, Ch’un-mei said, “I’ve only just gotten up, and I’m not feeling very well. I don’t want anything to drink.”

“Just look at you, little oily mouth!” exclaimed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “You’ve had more than a little already.”

“In any case, your mistress is not here today,” said Li P’ing-erh. “You might as well have a cup. What is there to be afraid of?”

“Sixth Lady,” said Ch’un-mei, “you go ahead and drink. I really don’t have a mind for it. Whether my mistress is here or not doesn’t make any difference to me. Even when she is present, if I don’t feel like it, and she offers me some, I refuse it.”

“If you don’t want any wine,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “have a mouthful of tea. I’ll send Ying-ch’un out front for a servant to go and meet your mistress.”

As he spoke, he offered her the cup of tea, steeped with osmanthus, sesame seeds, and cured bamboo shoots, that he had been holding in his hand.

Ch’un-mei accepted it as indifferently as though she were:

Uncertain whether it was there or not,[21]

and, after merely swallowing a mouthful, put it down, saying, “You needn’t send Ying-ch’un after anyone. I’ve already called in P’ing-an, who’s right here. He’s older than the others; you might as well send him.”

Hsi-men Ch'ing then called for P'ing-an through the window, and the servant responded, "I'm here, awaiting further orders."

"If you go," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "who will tend the front gate?"

"I've deputized Ch'i-t'ung to look after the gate," said P'ing-an.

"In that case," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "take a lantern with you and hurry off to meet your mistress."

Thereupon, he took a lantern and set straight off to meet P'an Chin-lien. Before he had gone halfway, whom should he see but Lai-an accompanying her sedan chair as it approached from the south.

It so happens that the two chair-bearers were persons with whom he was already familiar. One of them was called Chang Ch'uan-erh, and the other was called Wei Ts'ung-erh.

P'ing-an went up to them, took hold of one of the shafts with his hand, and said, "I've come to meet the mistress."

Chin-lien then proceeded to interrogate him, saying, "P'ing-an, is your father at home yet? Was it he who sent you to meet me, or somebody else?"

"For Father to send me," said P'ing-an, "is not likely at all. Not likely at all. It was Sister who sent me to meet you."

"I imagine that your father is not yet home from the yamen," said Chin-lien.

"Not yet home?" said P'ing-an. "He went to pay a visit to someone outside the gate, but he's been home since this afternoon. He's in the Sixth Lady's room having a good time and drinking wine. If Sister hadn't called me inside and pressured him to send me with a lantern to meet you, I wouldn't be here now. It seemed obvious to me that since Lai-an, who's still so young, was the only one accompanying your sedan chair, and there was reason to fear you might be late, or suffer some inconvenience on the road, you really needed an older servant to come meet you. But since that would have left no one to tend the front gate, I deputized Ch'i-t'ung to look after it, before being free to come myself."

"When you left," Chin-lien went on to ask, "where was your father?"

“When I left,” said P’ing-an, “Father was still in the Sixth Lady’s room drinking wine. It was only after Sister importuned him on your behalf that Father sent me to meet you.”

When Chin-lien heard this, she remained silent for some time in her sedan chair before expostulating sardonically, “That lousy ruffian! I might just as well be dead for all he cares. More than ever, he’s taken to sleeping all the time in that whore’s room, that’s all there is to it. And this may cause her to think that in the future she can depend forever on that piddling bladder’s spawn of hers. She had better beware of the fact that:

After high noon the sun has passed its zenith.

“Chang Ch’uan-erh, just let me ask you, since there are no outsiders present, and you frequent:

The doors of a thousand households,
The gates of ten thousand families,

which of them would clothe a baby who has only just been ejected from the womb in garments made from whole bolts of silk or satin?

Even if you were as rich as Moneybags Wang,
Would that do, or would it not do?”

“If you hadn’t mentioned it,” said Chang Ch’uan-erh, picking up where Chin-lien had left off, “I would not have presumed to say anything about it, but that would never do. To say nothing of the extravagance, I fear it would only serve to diminish his share of good luck. He hasn’t yet come down with smallpox, measles, chicken pox, or rubella. It’s no easy thing to raise a child to adulthood.

“Just last year there was a case, outside the East Gate, of a certain prominent family with its own large landed estates, the patriarch of which was in his sixties. He occupied a hereditary post and had incalculable wealth at his disposal, being one of those of whom it can be said that:

His oxen and horses form teeming herds,
His stores of grain are inexhaustible.

And as for his maidservants and concubines, to mention only those with the ability to take charge of a household and wear formal

robes, he had seventeen or eighteen at his disposal. But however much he wanted a son to show for it, he did not have any. So he:

Performed ceremonies in the Eastern Temple,
Presented offerings in the Western Monastery,
Donated sutras and contributed effigies,

leaving no stone unturned in his quest, when, contrary to all expectation, his seventh concubine bore him a son, which made him as happy as could be. Just as in the case of the master of your household, all day long he pampered the child as though it were a pearl on the palm, wrapping it in a nest of brocade and embroidery, satin and silk. Moreover, he replastered five rooms for it, until they looked like snow grottoes, and purchased four or five waiting women to look after it, carrying on all day as though he were touched in the head. But before it was three years old it came down with smallpox and died. If you don't mind my saying so, it's really better to:

Let them go and let them come like spilt water."
"Let them go and let them come like spilt water,

indeed!" responded Chin-lien. "His only regret is that he can't keep him wrapped in gold all day long."

"There's something else I'd better tell you about," said P'ing-an. "If I don't tell you, and you find out about it later, you'll hold it against me. It's about that bunch of scamps that Manager Han spoke to Father about. He has had them put in the squeezers and beaten in the yamen, has incarcerated them in the lockup, and intends to have them escorted to a higher court to stand trial. This morning Ying the Second came and spoke to Shu-t'ung about it. I imagine he must have received a number of taels of silver from him, because he took a sizable packet to the shop and insisted on having two or three taels worth chiseled off for his use. He then bought quite a lot in the way of delicacies and so forth, had Lai-hsing's wife prepare them for him, and proceeded to carry them off to the Sixth Lady's quarters. He also purchased a jug of Chin-hua wine. After first sharing these things with the Sixth Lady, he then took the remainder to the shop up front, where he invited Uncle Fu the Second, Pen the Fourth,

your son-in-law, Tai-an, and Lai-hsing to join him in making a communal feast of it. They enjoyed this treat right up until the time Father came home, before breaking up."

"Didn't he offer you anything to eat?" asked Chin-lien.

"Offer me anything!" exclaimed P'ing-an. "That impudent southern slave! Why even you ladies of the household don't carry any weight in his mind. I ought not to mention it, but Father is spoiling him rotten. Just to start out with, he has been up to dirty business with him in his studio. It's really not surprising since he was formerly a 'gate-boy' in the district yamen. There isn't much he doesn't know about anything. If Father doesn't get rid of that southern slave soon, before long the entire household will be corrupted by him."

"When he was drinking wine in Li P'ing-erh's quarters," asked Chin-lien, "how long did it go on?"

"They were drinking the better part of the day," replied P'ing-an. "I saw with my own eyes that he didn't come out until his face was bright red."

"When your father came home," said Chin-lien, "didn't he say anything to him about it?"

"Father's lips were sealed," said P'ing-an. "What could he have to say about it?"

"That lousy shameless ruffian of a benighted ruler!" exclaimed Chin-lien.

He'd sell his own son to obtain a son-in-law:
Both of them are going about it ass-backwards.

At the same time you're plotting to plug his shitty asshole, that slave, for his part, is busy fucking your favorite concubine."

She then enjoined P'ing-an, "If you ever catch him up to this kind of dirty business anywhere with that southern slave again, come and tell me about it."

"Your instructions are duly noted," replied P'ing-an. "I can count on old Chang Ch'uan-erh here not to leak inside information. Having served the needs of our household for lo these many years, he's an oldtimer. As far as I'm concerned:

If you don the black livery of a servant,
You must cling to even the blackest post.

Since you're my mistress, if I have anything to say, how could I fail to report it to you? But you must keep it to yourself and not mention so much as a word about me."

Thereupon, he accompanied the sedan chair, talking as they went, all the way to the front gate of the compound.

As P'an Chin-lien stepped out of the sedan chair, above the waist she wore a blouse of lilac-colored, cloud-patterned Nanking silk that opened down the middle, emblazoned with a variegated embroidered mandarin square enclosing a roundel that featured a pair of magpies face to face, a rebus for the words "happy reunion." Below the waist she had on a long trailing drawnwork skirt of white glazed damask with a foot-wide border that featured a motif of playing children tugging on a branch of vine.[22] On her bosom she had fastened a gold openwork brooch that held the two sides of her collar together, and beneath this she held a purse made of gold-spangled sheepskin.

Thus attired, she went first to the master suite in the rear compound to pay her respects to Wu Yüeh-niang.

"You could have stayed overnight," said Yüeh-niang. "What led you to come back so soon?"

"My mother wanted me to stay," replied Chin-lien, "but she's taken the eleven-year-old daughter of my maternal aunt into her household to raise, and we would all have been squeezed together on the same k'ang. *Who* wants to stay over under such conditions? I was afraid that:

What with all the intervening gates and doors,

I'd better just come home. My mother asked me to tell you how much she appreciated your generous gifts."

Thereupon, having paid her respects to Yüeh-niang, she went to the quarters of Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, and the others to say hello and then headed back to the front compound. On learning that Hsi-men Ch'ing was drinking wine in Li P'ing-erh's quarters, she went straight there to pay her respects to Li P'ing-erh. When Li

P’ing-erh saw her come in, she promptly stood up and welcomed her with a smile.

After they had exchanged mutual salutations, Li P’ing-erh said, “Sister, you’ve come home early. Please sit down and have a cup of wine.”

Turning to Ying-ch’un, she said, “Quickly, fetch a chair for the Fifth Lady to sit on.”

“I’ve already had something to drink today,” said Chin-lien. “Rather than indulging in two feasts on the same day, I’d better excuse myself.”

After saying which, she prepared to take herself nonchalantly off without more ado.

“A fine slave you are!” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “How impudent can you get! You come home and don’t even bother to salute me with a kowtow.”

Chin-lien picked up where he left off, saying, “I kowtow to you! You haven’t earned the right to it.

If a slave is not to be impudent,
Who is to be impudent?”

Gentle reader take note: These few words of Chin-lien’s were clearly intended to reflect satirically on Li P’ing-erh. Since she had first shared a few drinks with Shu-t’ung, and later done the same with Hsi-men Ch’ing, was this not a case of indulging in two feasts on the same day? But Hsi-men Ch’ing had no way of grasping the point of her remarks. Truly:

It is clear that words serve as both
the needle and thread;
That bring out discordant patterns
from the fabric’s ground.[23]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 35

HARBORING RESENTMENT HSI-MEN CH'ING PUNISHES P'ING-AN; PLAYING A FEMALE ROLE SHU-T'UNG ENTERTAINS HANGERS-ON

Do not enter the subprefectural yamen
  or the district yamen;
Practice diligence in the performance
  of your daily tasks.
The pond accumulates water in order to
  guard against drought;
Business, if conducted industriously,
  will support a family.
In teaching your sons and grandsons,
  teach them a craft;
Plant mulberry trees or date trees,
  do not plant flowers.
Try not to pay any attention to
  idle gossipmongering;[1]
When thirsty, drink spring water,
  if dejected, drink tea.[2]

THE BURDEN of the above eight lines of regulated verse is simply that fathers and mothers must train their sons and grandsons from infancy to:

  Study their lessons and learn propriety,[3]

so they will know how to be:

Filial and obedient to their parents,[4]
Respectful to their elders and superiors,
Harmonious with their neighbors, and
Content with their various occupations.[5]

On no account should they permit their young offspring to:

Become arrogant, indolent, or unruly,
Congregate in groups of three or five,
Turn into dedicated idlers, devoted to their leisure,
Sport bows and flaunt arrows,[6]
Make a hobby of raising caged birds,
Play at kickball and suchlike sports,[7]
Drink wine or engage in gambling,
Toy with the breeze and patronize prostitutes, or
Do whatever they please without restraint.

If they do, in the future they are sure to:

Devote themselves to stirring up trouble, and
Bring their families to rack and ruin.[8]

Families such as this only succeed in involving their sons in the meshes of the law, with the result that, at the worst:

Their lives are lost and their families ruined;[9]

or, at the least:

They suffer chastisement and endure incarceration,
Their property is prey to government confiscation,
Their conduct is governed by petty functionaries,
Their fathers and elder brothers are implicated,
They are troubled by remorse and subject to sorrow.
What benefit is there to be derived from this?

The story goes that when Hsi-men Ch'ing arrived at the yamen the next morning, he first withdrew from the courtroom to consult with Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling, to whom he said, "These four men have repeatedly sent people to me seeking to pull strings on their behalf, in order to secure lenient treatment for them."

"People have come to my place about it, too," said Hsia Yen-ling, "but I hesitated to raise the issue with you. Since that's the way

things stand, we might as well simply have them brought into court here and now, give them a warning, and let them go."

"What you say makes sense," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

They then ascended the tribunal and ordered the attendants to bring them before the court. The culprits, Ch'e Tan and company, knelt down before them. Afraid they would get another beating, they kowtowed for all they were worth.

Without waiting for Hsia Yen-ling to initiate the proceedings, Hsi-men Ch'ing said, "What am I to do with a bunch of 'bare sticks' like you! How did you ever get so many people to speak up on your behalf? You all ought to be escorted to a higher court to stand trial, but I'll let you off this once. If any of you ever falls into my hands again, I'll see to it that you die a living death in prison. Now get out of here."

Whereupon, along with Han the Second, they were all shouted out of the courtroom and fled, as though:

> Whether their fates were governed by metal or by water,
> There was no place for them to hide.

This is the way the case was settled. But no more of this.

To resume our story, Ying Po-chüeh, with five taels of silver in hand, sought out Shu-t'ung to get word of what had happened, and surreptitiously slipped him the silver. Shu-t'ung accepted it and put it in his sleeve, but P'ing-an, from his vantage point at the gate, caught sight of this transaction.

Shu-t'ung thereupon said to Ying Po-chüeh, thus and so, "I spoke to Father about it yesterday, and today he has gone to the yamen to settle the case."

"The fathers and elder brothers of those four have approached me repeatedly about it," said Ying Po-chüeh. "They are afraid that they will be subjected to further punishment."

"You can rest easy on that score," said Shu-t'ung. "I can assure you they won't suffer so much as a single stroke."

On receiving this information, Ying Po-chüeh hurried off to communicate this news to them.

By lunchtime the four scamps had returned to their homes, where each and every one of them laid hold of their fathers and elder brothers and began to weep out loud. Each of them had lost no inconsiderable amount of silver, only to end up with the scars of a beating on their haunches. They would not dare to recklessly foment any trouble in the future. Truly:

Catastrophe ever follows in the wake
of officious actions;
Vexation is always the consequence
of lack of forbearance.

To resume our story, before Hsi-men Ch'ing returned home that day, Shu-t'ung called Lai-an into the studio to sweep the floor and, while he was there, opened a food box, in which someone had sent a place setting of decorative confectionery, and gave him some molded sugar candy[10] to eat.

As a result, that page boy, though he:

Never, ever, should have done it,

said to him, "Brother Shu-t'ung, I've got something to tell you. Yesterday, when brother P'ing-an went to meet the Fifth Lady's sedan chair, he told all kinds of tales about you along the way."

"What did he say about me?" Shu-t'ung demanded to know.

"He said that you had managed to squeeze a few taels of silver out of someone, with which you made bold to buy wine and meat and have it delivered to the Sixth Lady's quarters, where you remained eating and drinking for half the day before coming out. And that you had then employed the leftovers to treat the staff in the shop in the front compound but had not offered him anything to eat. He also said that you and Father had been up to some kind of business in the studio."

Nothing might have happened if Shu-t'ung had not heard this, but having heard it, he made a point of remembering it, though he allowed the rest of the day to go by without saying anything about it.

The next day, Hsi-men Ch'ing had made prior arrangements not to go to the yamen that morning, but to go to the Temple of Eternal

Felicity outside the South Gate, where the farewell party to see off Stockade Commander Hsü Nan-ch'i to his new post was being held.

It was not until that afternoon that he returned home, when he dismounted and instructed P'ing-an, saying, "If anyone should come looking for me, just tell them that I haven't come home yet."

When he had finished speaking, he went to the front reception hall, where Shu-t'ung helped him off with his outer garments.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then asked him, "Did anyone show up today?"

"No one," Shu-t'ung replied. "But His Honor Hsü Feng-hsiang, the supervisor of the State Farm Battalion, sent you two packages of crabs and ten catties of fresh fish. I sent off a thank-you note in reply and gave the messenger two mace of silver. Also, your elder brother-in-law, Wu K'ai, sent six invitations inviting the ladies of the household to attend the third-day celebrations tomorrow."

It so happens that Wu K'ai's son, Wu Shun-ch'en, had just married Third Sister Cheng, the niece of their former neighbor Ch'iao Hung's wife. Hsi-men Ch'ing had already sent them the customary present of tea, and this is why they had received these invitations.

Hsi-men Ch'ing went to Wu Yüeh-niang's quarters in the rear compound and showed her the invitations, saying, "You had all better prepare yourselves to attend the party tomorrow."

When he had finished speaking, he came out to his studio and sat down. Shu-t'ung hastened to add some charcoal to the brazier, put some pellets of sweet-smelling incense in the burner, and then offered him a cup of tea with both hands. As Hsi-men Ch'ing held the teacup in his hand, the page boy slowly moved closer until he was standing right beside him at the end of the table. After some time, Hsi-men Ch'ing made a meaningful moue, signaling to him to close the door, and then pulled him onto his lap with one hand, while he pinched his cheeks with the other. Hsi-men Ch'ing stuck out his tongue, and the young man, who was holding a phoenix-embossed breath-sweetening lozenge in his mouth, transferred it to him, while at the same time stroking his jade stalk below.

"My child," Hsi-men Ch'ing asked, "Has anyone out there been giving you a hard time?"

“There is something,” the servant took the opportunity to say, “but if Father had not asked, I would not have presumed to bring it up.”

“Say what you like. It doesn’t matter,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Shu-t’ung then proceeded to tell him about P’ing-an, saying, “The other day, when you had called me into the studio, he and Hua-t’ung were eavesdropping outside the window. When I went outside afterwards to fetch some water so you could wash your hands, I saw them with my own eyes. Moreover, in talking to people outside, he called me a southern slave and abused me in every conceivable way.”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing heard this, he became enraged and fulminated, “If I don’t beat that slave’s bottom right off for him, I might as well forget it.”

We will say no more for the moment about this conversation in the studio.

For some time now, P’ing-an had been on the watch for any such goings on, so before anyone knew it, he barged into her room and told Chin-lien all about it. Chin-lien responded by sending Ch’un-mei to the front compound to ask Hsi-men Ch’ing if he would come speak to her.

No sooner had she rounded the corner of the juniper hedge than she encountered Hua-t’ung, who was playing with a pine moth caterpillar and said, “What have you come for, Sister? Father’s in the studio.”

Ch’un-mei merely gave him a rap on the head with her knuckles. When Hsi-men Ch’ing heard the rustling of skirts outside, he knew that someone was coming. Hastily pushing the page boy away, he went over to the bed and lay down, while Shu-t’ung pretended to busy himself with brush and inkstone at the desk.

Ch’un-mei pushed open the door and came in. When she saw Hsi-men Ch’ing, she licked her lips, and said, “The two of you are certainly keeping to yourselves in the room here, with the door closed, no less. No doubt you’re enjoying your honeymoon, but Mother has something she wants to say to you.”

Hsi-men Ch'ing, who was lying face-up with his head on the pillow, said, "Little oily mouth! What does she want to say to me? You go ahead. I'll come along after I've laid down for a while."

Ch'un-mei was adamant and said, "If you refuse to go, I'll drag you out of bed myself."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was unable to withstand her insistence on:

Dragging him away, dead or alive,

and allowed himself to be dragged off to Chin-lien's quarters.

"What was he up to in the front compound?" Chin-lien asked.

"He and the page boy, just the two of them, were in the studio, with the door latched," replied Ch'un-mei. "They were so quiet you'd think they were trying to catch a fly. Who knows what sort of funny business they were up to? It was just as though they were enjoying their honeymoon. When I went in, the page boy was at the desk, pretending to be engaged in his secretarial duties. I opened my eyes wide, but that one merely lay back on the bed, and was reluctant to come, even when I tried to drag him."

"When he comes into this room of mine," said Chin-lien, "it's just as though he were afraid someone was going to:

Stew him in a pot and eat him.

The worthless, shameless good-for-nothing! As though he still possessed a sense of shame! What do you suppose he was up to, in broad daylight, closing himself inside the room with that slave, for no good reason? No doubt he was busy boring his way into the stinking asshole of that slave; and at night he'll come into my room and want to sleep with me. How fastidious can you get!"

"You believe all the nonsense that little oily-mouth tells you," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. Since when did I do any such thing? I was looking on as he wrote out some gift cards and had just lain down on the bed."

"Why should you go out of your way to write out gift cards behind closed doors?" said Chin-lien. "What sort of:

Classified information or ominous rumor,

were you dealing with? Had you discovered:

A three-legged guardian deity, or
A double-horned elephant,
that you were afraid to let anyone see?

"Tomorrow sister-in-law Wu's family is holding a 'third-day party' to celebrate her son's marriage, and she has dropped us an invitation.

Neither too long, nor too short,[11]
you've got to come up with some piece of goods that I can take with me as a complimentary gift for the occasion. If you don't provide me with something, I'll have to find some other lover to demand it from. Elder Sister is presenting a complete outfit of clothes and five mace of silver, and some of the others have hairpins, or ornamental flowers. If I am the only one without anything, I won't go."

"Take a bolt of red silk from the clothes cabinet in the front compound as your complimentary gift," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"I won't be able to go then," said Chin-lien. "Who wants that diaphanous silk stuff, anyway? If I trot out something like that, everyone will only laugh at me."

"Don't get all worked up about it," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Wait till I go look on the upper floor over there. I'll find something suitable for you to give her. Right now I still need several more bolts of material for the congratulatory gifts I'm sending to the Eastern Capital, so I can pick up something for you as part of the same lot."

Thereupon, he went to the upper floor of Li P'ing-erh's belvedere and picked out two bolts of jet silk emblazoned with brocaded mandarin squares that featured a *ch'i-lin*, two bolts of Nanking variegated satin, one bolt of scarlet silk that featured a *tou-niu*[12] design, and a bolt of kingfisher blue cloud-patterned satin.

He then said to Li P'ing-erh, "How about coming up with a blouse of cloud-patterned damask for Chin-lien to give as a complimentary gift tomorrow? If you don't have anything like that available, I can send a servant with a note to get one from the silk goods store."

"There's no need for you to get anything from the store," said Li P'ing-erh. "I've got an outfit lying around of brocaded cloud-patterned damask, with a scarlet blouse and blue skirt, that I never

use. The two of us can join together in presenting it as our complimentary gift."

Li P'ing-erh proceeded to open a trunk and take it out, after which she personally took it over to show to Chin-lien, saying, "Pick whichever you like, Sister, either the blouse or the skirt. The two of us might as well wrap them both up in a single package and present it as our complimentary gift, which will save us the trouble of sending out for something else."

"As long as it's yours," said Chin-lien, "it's hardly right that I should make use of it."

"My good sister," said Li P'ing-erh, "how can you talk that way?"

She had to urge her for some time before Chin-lien consented to the arrangement. They then took the package out and had Ch'en Ching-chi replace the label and write their two names on it. Hsi-men Ch'ing returned to the task of selecting bolts of material in the rear compound. But no more of this.

To resume our story, P'ing-an was at his post at the front gate when whom should he see but Hsi-men Ch'ing's friend Pai Lai-ch'iang, or Scrounger Pai, who sauntered up and asked, "Is the honorable gentleman at home?"

"The master is not at home," replied P'ing-an.

Scrounger Pai did not believe it but walked straight in as far as the reception hall, where he noticed that the latticework doors were closed and said, "So he really isn't at home. Where has he gone?"

"Today he's gone outside the South Gate to see someone off," said P'ing-an. "He hasn't come home yet."

"If he was seeing someone off," said Scrounger Pai, "he ought to be home by now."

"Uncle Pai," said P'ing-an, "if you have something to say, say it to me, and I'll tell him about it when he comes back."

"It's not anything in particular," said Scrounger Pai, "it's just that we haven't seen each other for some time, and so, finding myself at leisure, I've dropped by to pay him a visit. Since he's not here, I'll wait for him."

“I fear he may not come back for some time,” said P’ing-an. “You’ll merely wait for him in vain.”

Scrounger Pai chose to ignore this suggestion and, pushing open the latticework doors, walked into the reception hall and sat himself down in a chair. The page boys paid no attention to him but let him do as he pleased.

Who could have anticipated that:

As providence would have it,

at that very time Hsi-men Ch’ing told Ying-ch’un to carry the bolts of material he had chosen and proceeded to accompany her toward the front compound. Just as they came around the hanging screen, the first thing he saw was Scrounger Pai sitting there in the reception hall. Ying-ch’un put down the bolts of material she was carrying and headed back to the rear compound as fast as she could go.

“So my brother is at home after all!” exclaimed Scrounger Pai as he came down from the hall and greeted him with a bow.

Hsi-men Ch’ing, upon seeing him, had no alternative but to offer him a seat. When he surveyed Scrounger Pai, he saw that:

On his head he sported a washed-out, reblocked, old
silk cap, that looked as though it had made the
pilgrimage as far as the summit of Mount T’ai;[13]
On his body he wore a stiffly-starched white cotton gown,
with a frayed collar and worn lapels, that looked
as though it had been rescued from a fire;
On his feet he had antique bronze-textured, edible tree
fungus-shaped, black boots, that curled up at toe
and heel, had hopelessly split seams, and squeaked
like the beats of a clapper keeping time to a song;
Into which were stuffed a pair of stirrup-like stockings,
barely held together by tangled string, the yellow
threads of which were beginning to turn fragrant.

Hsi-men Ch’ing sat down with him but did not call for tea.

Noticing that Ch’in-t’ung was standing in attendance nearby, Hsi-men Ch’ing instructed him, “Take the bolts of material to the guest

room and get our son-in-law to have them properly wrapped up and sealed."

Ch'in-t'ung assented and proceeded to carry the bolts of material off toward the antechamber.

Scrounger Pai lifted his hand in salutation and said, "I'm afraid I've been remiss in not coming to see you for some time."

"Many thanks for your concern," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "I've been constantly away from home myself. Every day I'm tied up with business at the yamen."

"Brother," asked Scrounger Pai, "do you have to go to the yamen every day?"

"Every single day I have to be in attendance at both sessions of the court," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing. "On ordinary days we have to sit on the bench and hear cases, and on the first and fifteenth days of every month we also have to perform the ceremonies of bowing before the imperial tablet, taking the formal roll call, presiding over the general disposition of pending cases, and mustering the local constables, the neighborhood heads of the relevant mutual security units, and the police officers on rotational duty. Then there is a lot more busywork when I get home. I really don't have a moment's worth of free time.

"Today I had to go outside the South Gate because Hsü Nan-ch'i has just been promoted to the post of commander of the Hsin-p'ing Stockade, and his colleagues held a party to see him off. I've only just arrived home. Tomorrow Eunuch Director Hsüeh, the supervisor of the imperial estates, has invited me to a party, but it's too far away, so I can't go. Day after tomorrow I've got to find out what is entailed in going to welcome the new regional investigating censor for Shantung. On top of all this, Ts'ai T'iao, the fourth son of Grand Preceptor Ts'ai Ching in the Eastern Capital, has been appointed commandant-escort upon his marriage to Princess Mao-te,[14] and T'ung T'ien-yin, the nephew of T'ung Kuan, the defender-in-chief of the Palace Command, has just been appointed to headquarters and promoted to the post of commander of the guard, with a substantive appointment as notary of the Bureau of Military Affairs.

Congratulatory gifts to the several relevant levels will be required. What with all this, I've been completely worn out for the last few days."

They had been talking for what seemed like half a day before Lai-an showed up with some tea. Scrounger Pai had just picked up his teacup and swallowed a mouthful, when whom should he see but Tai-an, who came flying toward the interior of the compound with a large red missive in his hand.

"Judicial Commissioner Hsia is here," he reported. "He's just dismounting outside."

While Hsi-men Ch'ing went into the rear compound to change his clothes, Scrounger Pai concealed himself in an antechamber on the west side of the courtyard, from which vantage point he could observe what happened by looking out through the hanging blind.

After some time, Judicial Commissioner Hsia came in. He was wearing a round-collared robe of jet moiré emblazoned with a mandarin square of variegated embroidery featuring a golden lion with a ruffled mane, over a kingfisher blue silk undergown. Around his waist he wore an official girdle with a decorative plaque of aromatic liquidambar wood mounted in a gold setting. On his feet he wore black court boots. A bunch of keys dangled from his waist. The whole area was rendered black by the number of his servitors as he made his way in to the reception hall.

Hsi-men Ch'ing, having donned his official cap and girdle, came out from the rear compound to greet him. When they had finished with the social amenities, the two of them sat down in the positions appropriate for guest and host. Before long, Ch'i-t'ung came out with two cups of tea on a square platter of carved Yunnan agateware lacquer. The bodies of the teacups were made of fine plaited bamboo splints, covered with a thin layer of lacquer and mounted in silver. The teaspoons were of gold, in the shape of apricot leaves. The tea was steeped with osmanthus and cured green soybeans.

After they had finished their tea, Judicial Commissioner Hsia said, "With regard to that matter I mentioned the other day of going

to welcome the new regional investigating censor, I sent someone to inquire about it today. It turns out that his surname is Tseng, and that he became a metropolitan graduate last year, in the year *i-wei*.[15] His certificate of appointment has already been received in Tung-ch'ang prefecture, the seat of his jurisdiction. Our colleagues are all planning to set out tomorrow to welcome him at a distance. Although you and I are military officials, we serve as judicial commissioners in a yamen authorized by express imperial command, so we are not the same as the authorities in regular army and guard units. Consequently, we can delay our departure until the day after tomorrow and look for a place ten li outside the city at which to prepare a meal in order to welcome the new regional investigating censor."

"What my senior colleague proposes is just the thing," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "But there is no need for you to trouble yourself about it. Your pupil will send someone to find a suitable Buddhist or Taoist temple or monastery, or a private estate would also do, and send a cook ahead to make all the necessary preparations."

"In that case," said Judicial Commissioner Hsia, "I'll impose upon my colleague once again."

After they had finished their conversation and drunk another serving of tea, Judicial Commissioner Hsia got up and took his leave. When Hsi-men Ch'ing had seen him off, he came back inside and changed out of his formal clothes, but Scrounger Pai had still not departed.

Striding back into the reception hall, he sat down and said to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "Ever since you stopped attending the monthly meetings of our club two months ago, it has been in danger of breaking up. Old Sun, although he has the necessary seniority, is unable to take charge of anything, and Brother Ying the Second is dodging his responsibilities. The other day, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, we held a meeting at the Temple of the Jade Emperor in conjunction with the celebration of the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal during the Middle Primordial Festival, at which, including myself, only three or four of us showed up. There was no

one to foot the bill, since all of us had turned up empty handed. It was an embarrassment to Abbot Wu who, after the ceremony of dismissing the marshals that evening, had engaged the services of a professional storyteller to entertain us, at considerable expense to himself. Although he didn't say anything about it, all of us:

Felt uneasy at heart.[16]

It's not like it was in the old days when you presided over the club and were able to take charge of things. It won't be long before we'll have to ask you to start attending again."

"Needless to say," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "if the club must break up, let it break up. I scarcely have the time to worry about such things. If I have the leisure, I'll continue to arrange for Abbot Wu to perform the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal once a year in order to requite Heaven and Earth, but that's it. You all can continue to meet, or not, as you please, but you needn't bother to tell me about it."

With these few words of reproof he succeeded in reducing Scrounger Pai to silence, but he continued to sit there as before. When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw that he was not going to leave, he had no alternative but to call for Ch'in-t'ung and have him set up a table in one of the antechambers. He then went and fetched four saucers of appetizers:

Both meaty and vegetarian,

including one of pan-fried wheat gluten, and one of roast pork. Hsi-men Ch'ing kept him company as he ate, and poured the wine. He sent to the rear compound for a pair of large chased silver goblets and poured out several cupfuls for him before he got up to take his leave.

Hsi-men Ch'ing accompanied him as far as the gate that led into the second courtyard, where he said, "You'll have to excuse me if I don't see you off any further. I'm wearing an informal skullcap in which it wouldn't do for me to be seen in public."

At this point Scrounger Pai finally said farewell and made his departure.

Hsi-men Ch'ing returned to the reception hall, pulled out a chair for himself, and called in a loud voice for P'ing-an.

When P'ing-an appeared before him, Hsi-men Ch'ing cursed at him, saying, "You lousy slave! Still standing are you?"

He then called for three or four of the orderlies on duty to stand in attendance on either side. P'ing-an did not know what it was all about. So frightened that his face turned as sallow as wax, he got down on his knees.

"When I came in the gate," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I instructed you that, no matter who came to see me, you were to reply that I was not at home. Why did you not obey me?"

"When Uncle Pai came to call," replied P'ing-an, "I told him that you had gone outside the South Gate to see someone off, and had not yet returned home; but he didn't believe me and insisted on coming inside anyway. I followed him in and said to him, 'Uncle Pai, if you have something to say, all you have to do is tell me what it is, and when Father comes home, I'll report it to him.' He didn't say anything in response but pushed open the latticework doors to the reception hall himself and took a seat. Afterwards, who could have anticipated that you would come out and run into him?"

"Why you slave," cursed Hsi-men Ch'ing, "you can stop shooting off your mouth! You've got some nerve! No doubt you'd let anyone come in while you're off gambling and drinking somewhere, instead of sticking to your post at the front gate."

Then, turning to the attendants, he ordered, "Smell his breath"

The orderlies smelled his breath and reported, "There's no odor of wine there."

"I want two of you who are experienced at administering punishment to stand by," ordered Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Give this slave a real finger-squeezing for me."

Thereupon, what with:

Two men having to deal with but one,

they put on the finger-squeezers and proceeded to tighten them.

They squeezed P'ing-an until:

The pain was difficult to bear,
and he called out, “I really did say that Father was not at home, but he forced his way in.”

The orderly who had put the finger-squeezers on pulled the string taut, knelt down, and reported, “the squeezers are in place.”

“Give the squeezers fifty strokes,” ordered Hsi-men Ch’ing, “and have someone count them off from the side.”

When the squeezers had been struck fifty times, they stopped.

“Give him an additional twenty strokes with the light bamboo,” ordered Hsi-men Ch’ing.

In no time at all, he was given twenty strokes of the bamboo, with the result that:

The skin was broken, the flesh was split, and
His haunches were completely covered with weals.

“Let him go,” shouted Hsi-men Ch’ing.

The two orderlies stepped forward to remove the finger-squeezers, and when they did so, P’ing-an screamed with pain.

“What am I to do with you, you lousy slave!” cursed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “You say you were on duty at the gate, but I imagine you have been demanding bribes from my visitors and thereby damaging my reputation abroad. If any hint of such things should ever come to my ears, I’ll have that slave’s bottom of yours beaten right off for you.”

P’ing-an kowtowed, got to his feet, hitched up his trousers, and made his way outside.

Noticing that Hua-t’ung was standing nearby, Hsi-men Ch’ing said, “Take this little slave down and give his fingers a squeezing too.”

The page boy, in his turn, was thereupon subjected to the squeezers until he:

Howled outlandishly like a stuck pig.

But we will say no more at present about how Hsi-men Ch’ing went about subjecting people to the squeezers in the reception hall.

To resume our story, P'an Chin-lien came out of her quarters and headed toward the rear compound, but she had not gotten any further than the ceremonial gate behind the main reception hall when she observed Meng Yü-lou, all by herself, eavesdropping behind the hanging screen.

"What are you listening to here?" Chin-lien asked.

"I'm here listening to Father having P'ing-an beaten," Yü-lou replied. "Even that little slave, Hua-t'ung, has been put in the finger-squeezers and given a squeezing. I don't know what it's all about."

In a little while, Ch'i-t'ung came by, and Yü-lou called him to a halt and asked him, "Why is P'ing-an being beaten?"



Harboring Resentment Hsi-men Ch’ing Punishes P’ing-an

“Father’s angry with him for letting Scrounger Pai into the house,” Ch’i-t’ung replied.

“It wasn’t really because he let in Scrounger Pai,” said Chin-lien, picking up where Ch’i-t’ung had left off, it must be because he’s been:

Busting his ivories.

If he hadn’t been:

Busting his ivories,

why should he have beaten the page boy this way for no good reason? That lousy shameless good-for-nothing! It’s a wonder he still has the face to play the master of the house, utterly devoid of shame as he is.”

At this point, Ch’i-t’ung went about his business.

“What did you mean, just now, by saying that he had been:

Busting his ivories?”

asked Yü-lou.

“I’ve been wanting to tell you but haven’t gotten around to it,” said Chin-lien. “Day before yesterday, I went to my mother’s place to celebrate her birthday. It has come to my ears that, while I was not at home, that southern ‘sweetie’[17] of a page boy, having managed to squeeze a few taels of silver out of someone in return for his good offices, proceeded to lay them out on delicacies, which he had prepared for him in the front compound, put in square boxes, along with a jug of Chin-hua wine, and delivered to the Sixth Lady’s quarters, where he remained eating and drinking with her for half the day before coming out.

“When that shameless good-for-nothing came home, he was told about it, but he had nothing to say. On top of which, he locked himself inside the studio in the garden together with that page boy. Who knows what sort of business the two of them were up to. The page boy, P’ing-an, happened to come inside to deliver a notice from somebody and, seeing that the door was closed, was standing there outside the window, when that southern page boy opened the door and saw him there. I imagine he must have reported this to that lousy shameless good-for-nothing, and today he’s getting his revenge by beating P’ing-an in order to get his rocks off. Who knows

but what, one of these days, that southern slave is going to be the ruination of the whole household. But what's it to him!"

"That's a fine way to talk!" said Yü-lou. "If you include the whole household:

There are both the wise and the foolish.[18]

You don't mean to say that all of us are corruptible, do you."

"That's not it," said Chin-lien. "Let me explain it to you. Right now in this household there are only two people who hold a preferential place in his heart. One of them is a member of the household and the other is not. All day long he carries on just as though his soul has become fixated upon their bodies. Whenever he sees them:

He talks, and he laughs;

while the rest of us are so out of favor that, no matter what we do, he treats us like an angry fighting cock. The lousy fickle ruffian, he'll come to a bad end! It's just as though his heart has been bewitched by a vixen so that he has eyes only for them. Third Sister, just you listen to me. In the future they're bound to bring about:

Eight strange and seven untoward events,

around here.

"Just today, on the matter of a complimentary gift, I had a quarrel with him. When he came home, he didn't go to her quarters but went to his studio instead, where who knows what he was up to. I sent Ch'un-mei with instructions to find out where he was and ask him to come and see me. Who could have anticipated that, in broad daylight, he had shut himself up in the studio with that southern slave, behind closed doors. Ch'un-mei pushed open the door and went in, which startled him to such an extent that he was rendered:

Wide-eyed and speechless.

When he came to my quarters, I gave him a piece of my mind, but he did his best to evade the issue:

Concealing the left and covering up the right.[19]

At first he offered me a bolt of red silk material to serve as my complimentary gift, but I rejected it. Afterwards, he went over to

the upper floor of Li P'ing-erh's belvedere to look for something more suitable.

The thief suffers from a sense of guilt.[20]

Troubled as she was by a bad conscience, she took an outfit of brocade clothing out of her trunk and personally came to offer it to me, saying, 'Sister, see if you don't think this outfit would do. It would save me the trouble of breaking it up if the two of us shared in making it our complimentary gift.' I said, 'As long as it's yours, it's hardly right that I should make use of it. I'll just get Father to send for something from the silk goods store instead.' She became flustered at this and said, 'Sister, why make such a fuss about it. Pick whichever you like, either the blouse or the skirt, and when you're satisfied, we can have it taken up front so Son-in-law Ch'en can attach a label and write our names on it.' She pressured me into accepting it for half the day before I finally assented. She let me pick the blouse."

"So that's that," said Yü-lou. "It was kind of her to insist on offering it to you."

"You don't understand," said Chin-lien. "It's not right to concede anything to her. In this day and age:

One merely fears the wide-eyed guardian deity;
There's no need to fear the closed-eyed Buddha.

No matter whether it be wives or husbands, if you cut them the slightest bit of slack, you'll end up being treated like:

Warden Wang's lictors;
Not even worth a fuck."

"Slavey Six," teased Yü-lou:

"You're just like wheat gluten;
As hard to masticate as leather."

At this sally the two of them laughed together.

Whom should they see just then but Hsiao-yü, who came in and said, "Third Lady and Fifth Lady, you're invited to the rear compound to eat some crabs. I'll go on to invite the Sixth Lady and Mistress Ch'en."

The two of them walked toward the interior, hand in hand, where they found Wu Yüeh-niang and Li Chiao-erh sitting in the veranda outside the door of the master suite.

"What are the two of you laughing about?" they were asked.

"I'm laughing at Father for beating P'ing-an," said Chin-lien.

"I was upset by all the wild screaming and yelling," said Yüeh-niang, "and figured that he must be having somebody beaten. So it turns out to have been him. What was it all about?"

"It was because he had been:

Busting his ivories,"

said Chin-lien.

Yüeh-niang, who was ingenuous by nature, then asked, "What ivories are you talking about? Where were they, and how did he come to break them?"

At this, P'an Chin-lien and Meng Yü-lou started to guffaw:

Falling into a heap with laughter.

"I don't know what you're laughing at," said Yüeh-niang, "if you don't explain it to me."

"Sister," said Yü-lou, "you don't know about it, but Father had P'ing-an beaten because he let Scrounger Pai into the house."

"So what if he did let Scrounger Pai into the house," said Yüeh-niang. "But what's all this about his:

Busting his ivories?

I've never seen the like of that loafer, without a stake of his own to venture, sitting at home with his idle prick between his legs, and only venturing out for no good reason:

As though he didn't know any better,

in the hopes of picking up something at somebody else's place."

"He just came to call on Father," said Lai-an.

"A likely story!" said Yüeh-niang. "I suppose he just fell off his k'ang and decided to come pay a call. Don't talk such stinking rot! It's enough not to accuse him of coming only to scrounge something to eat."

After some time, Li P'ing-erh and Hsi-men Ta-chieh showed up, and the group of them sat down in a circle to enjoy the crabs.

"There's still some of that grape wine in my room," Yüeh-niang said to Hsiao-yü. "Go and decant some of it for the ladies to drink."

At this, Chin-lien, sharp-tongued as ever, said, "To go with the crabs, it would be even better if we had some Chin-hua wine to drink."

"It's too bad we've got only the crabs to go with the wine," she went on to say. "If we had a roast duck, we could tear it into pieces to complement the wine."

"At this hour, where would you go to buy a roast duck?" said Yüeh-niang.

Among those present, when Li P'ing-erh heard this, her face turned crimson with embarrassment. Truly:

The burden of the tale contains
  a deep meaning;
The topic of the story conceals
  a hidden intent.

Yüeh-niang, however, was a straightforward person. How could she be expected to understand:

The story within the story?

We will say no more, at present, about how the ladies ate their crabs.

To resume our story, P'ing-an had been punished so severely that he was barely able to waddle as he made his way to his room at the front of the compound. His fingers had been squeezed so badly that he had to keep them splayed apart.

Pen the fourth, Lai-hsing, and company all hurried over to ask him, "P'ing-an, what did Father have you beaten for?"

"How should I know?" wailed P'ing-an.

"Father was angry with him for letting Scrounger Pai into the house," said Lai-hsing.

"Luckily you were there at the time," said P'ing-an, "and saw how I attempted to stop him twice, and reported that Father was not at

home. But he insisted on going in and made his way inside the latticework doors to the reception hall. I said to him, ‘If you have something to say, say it to me. Father has gone outside the South Gate to see someone off. I don’t know when he’ll be back. You’ll merely wait for him in vain.’ He said, ‘I’ll wait for him anyway,’ and without another word, he proceeded to take a seat. Who could have anticipated that Father would come out from the rear compound and run into him? He really didn’t have anything to say to him, except, ‘I’ve happened by to pay you a call.’ After tea had been served to him, he still wouldn’t get up to leave, when who should appear but His Honor Judicial Commissioner Hsia. I assumed he would leave then, but he concealed himself in an antechamber and still refused to depart. Father had no alternative but to invite him to remain. Anyone with the slightest sense of shame would have stayed a little while and then made his departure, but he refused to leave until wine had been served to him. Father was so irritated that when he came back inside he had me beaten, saying that I had been shirking my duties at the gate and letting people into the house. If you say it’s just my rotten luck that I failed to stop him, I can only reply, ‘Didn’t I try to stop him? It was he that insisted on coming in and sitting down, and he got away with it, while I got beaten.

What’s it got to do with me?’

“That god-damned louse of a dog-bone!

His sons will be thieves and his daughters whores![21]

May the food he scrounged in our house be evacuated through his backbone!”

“If it rots his backbone, it will only be doing him a favor,” said Lai-hsing. “It will leave room for him to scrounge even more in the future.”

“I hope he develops a case of dysphagia!” exclaimed P’ing-an. “May cancer devour his esophagus! The world is full of people who exhibit shameless effrontery, but none of them is a match for this shameless dog-bone. He comes barging into our household so often the dog doesn’t even bite him. The lousy scrounging beggar! He’s

been fucked so often, the lousy cuckold, it's a wonder his asshole hasn't putrefied!"

"If his asshole had putrefied," laughed Lai-hsing, "who would be the wiser? People would merely attribute the stench to the rankness of his body odor."

Everyone laughed at this sally.

"I dare say he doesn't have enough rice to make his evening meal," said P'ing-an. "Who knows what hunger his wife must endure? He's at such loose ends he's reduced to scrounging something to eat at someone else's place to save the cost of a meal at home.

That's not a long-term solution.[22]

He'd do better to let his wife take on a lover, and play the role of cuckold. At least that would be to show some sign of vitality, rather than abjectly exposing himself to abuse at the hands of other people's servants."

Truly:

On the outside he may play the
role of wastrel,
But at home his wife can only
nibble her toes.

Tai-an was in the shop having his hair cut. When he had paid the barber and sent him on his way, he came out and said, "P'ing-an, if I don't say anything, I'll be so frustrated I could burst. You serve your master as a servant, but you still don't understand the nature of the head of the household. How can you blame anyone else for your troubles? As the saying goes:

You don't raise a child in the hope it will
shit gold and piss silver;
All you can hope for is that it will
respond empathetically to you.

What you were faced with is not to be compared to the situation when Uncle Ying the Second or Uncle Hsieh come to pay a call. If you respond to them that he is at home, or not at home, they are on such intimate and familiar terms with each other that it really

doesn’t make any difference. But where anyone of lesser standing is concerned, and when he has specifically instructed you to tell them that he is not at home, how could you just let them in?

If he doesn’t beat you,

Who should he beat instead?”

“P’ing-an,” said Pen the Fourth in jest, “has reverted to his childhood. His fingers are splayed like those of a baby learning to play pat-a-cake. Or, perhaps, he’s just been playing with himself[23] too strenuously all day.”

Everyone laughed again at this sally.

“If he got it for letting someone in,” said Pen the Fourth, “what did Hua-t’ung do to entitle him to a share of the squeezers? A tasty treat, indeed, to have to share with anyone, the way you’d keep someone company in:

Drinking wine or eating meat!

When your ten fingers are fastened in the squeezers, what need is there for someone to share the treat?”

Hua-t’ung was still rubbing his hands and crying.

“My child, stop crying,” Tai-an said to him in jest. “Your mother has really spoiled you. She’s taken the trouble to tie these crullers between your fingers, and you don’t even seem to enjoy them.”

We will say no more, at present, about how the servants carried on at the front of the compound.

In the meantime, Hsi-men Ch’ing was busy in the anteroom supervising Ch’en Ching-chi and Shu-t’ung as they wrapped up the gifts and bolts of material, and wrote out the accompanying documents, so that they could be dispatched to the Eastern Capital the following day, to be delivered to Commandant-Escort Ts’ai T’iao and Commander T’ung T’ien-yin. But no more of this.

The next day, after Hsi-men Ch’ing went off to his yamen, Wu Yüeh-niang and his other womenfolk, riding in five sedan chairs, wearing pearl and jewel-bedecked caps on their heads, clad in brocaded gowns, and with Lai-hsing’s wife accompanying them in a smaller sedan chair, set out for the house of her sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K’ai, to participate in the third-day celebrations after the

marriage of their son, Wu Shun-ch'en, to Third Sister Cheng. Only Sun Hsüeh-o and Hsi-men Ta-chieh were left at home to look after the house.

That morning, Han Tao-kuo sent gifts to thank Hsi-men Ch'ing for his efforts on his behalf, including a jug of Chin-hua wine, a jellied goose, a set of pig's trotters, four roast ducks, and four shad. On the accompanying card he had written, "Presented by your pupil, Han Tao-kuo, with his compliments." Because there was no one at home, Shu-t'ung declined to formally accept them but detained the entire consignment, boxes, carrying pole, and all, until Hsi-men Ch'ing came home from the yamen, when he brought them out to show to him.

Hsi-men Ch'ing sent Ch'in-t'ung to the shop to fetch Manager Han and proceeded to berate him for his lack of savoir faire, saying, "What did you have to go buying these gifts for? I cannot possibly accept them."

"Your Honor," said Han Tao-kuo, with a bow:

"My obligations to you are so great,
for having taken pity on me in my plight, and providing me with a way to vent my spleen, that my entire family:
Will never be able to thank you enough.[24]
These insignificant things are merely intended to be:
A token of my gratitude.
I hope Your Honor will see fit to accept them with a smile."

"This will never do," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "After all, as an employee of mine:

You're like a member of the family.
How can I accept presents from you?"

He then turned to the original bearer of the gifts and said, "Carry them back where they came from."

Han Tao-kuo was thrown into such consternation by this that he pled with him for half the day before Hsi-men Ch'ing was induced to instruct his attendants, saying, "I will only accept the goose and the wine. Have the other gifts carried back where they came from."

He then ordered page boys to take cards and go to invite Ying the Second and Hsieh Hsi-ta to pay him a visit.

Turning to Han Tao-kuo, he said, “This afternoon, ask Lai-pao to look after the store for you, and come sit with us for a while.”

Saying, “You won’t even accept my gifts, and now I’m putting Your Honor to additional trouble,” Han Tao-kuo assented and left.

Hsi-men Ch’ing arranged to have his household lay in a lavish quantity of additional provisions and, that afternoon, had an Eight Immortals table set up in the summerhouse in the garden, the Kingfisher Pavilion. Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta were the first to arrive.

“Manager Han has gone to the trouble to buy gifts in order to thank me for my intervention on his behalf,” Hsi-men Ch’ing told them. “Despite the fact that I repeatedly refused to accept them, he has pulled out all the stops in begging me to do so. I have consented to keep only the goose and the wine, but it would hardly be right to enjoy them all by myself. So I have invited the two of you to come keep him company during his visit.”

“He consulted with me about buying gifts in order to thank you,” said Ying Po-chüeh. “But I said to him, Whatever you give him is not going to mean anything to someone who lives on such a lavish scale. Don’t put yourself to the trouble. Even if you send the gifts, he is certain not to accept them.’ So how has it turned out? It’s just as though I’d:

Made the trip through your belly.

Sure enough, you refused to accept what he sent you.”

When he had finished speaking, he had a drink of tea, and the two of them started to play a game of backgammon.

Before long, Han Tao-kuo showed up, and after the two of them had exchanged salutations, they all sat down together. Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta occupied the seats of honor, Hsi-men Ch’ing presided over the feast as host, and Han Tao-kuo sat down to one side.

Four plates and four bowls were immediately provided, and the table was spread with an assortment of delicacies in such profusion

that they could not have been finished. In addition there were two large platters piled high with steamed corn flour pastries basted with rendered goose fat. Hsi-men Ch'ing' took the jug of Chin-hua wine and ordered that Lai-an should open it in their presence and heat it in a brass warming pan, that Shu-t'ung should serve it to them, and that Hua-t'ung should be in charge of fetching additional condiments and dishes from the rear compound, as needed.

When the wine had been poured, Ying Po-chüeh instructed Shu-t'ung, saying, "Go back to your First Lady's quarters in the rear compound and ask, 'Why haven't any of the crabs been trotted out for Master Ying the Second to eat?' Go and say that I want a taste of the crabs."

"You silly dog!" expostulated Hsi-men Ch'ing, "There's not a crab to be had. To tell you the truth, His Honor Hsü Feng-hsiang, the supervisor of the State Farm Battalion, did send me two packages of crabs the other day, but by now the ladies of the household have eaten them all up. The few that are left over have already been pickled."

Turning to a page boy, he instructed him, saying, "Split up a few of the pickled crabs and bring them out for us."

"The ladies of the household are not at home today," he went on to explain. "They've gone to my Sister-in-law Wu's place for the third-day celebration of her son's marriage."

Before long, Hua-t'ung came out bearing two platters of pickled crabs, which Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta proceeded to polish off completely between them.

Noticing that Shu-t'ung was pouring the wine, Ying Po-chüeh said to him, "In his whole life, your Uncle Ying has never been able to abide drinking wine without a song to accompany it.[25] You boast of being able to sing southern-style songs, but I haven't heard any of them. Today, whatever happens, I won't drink this wine unless you sing one for me."

Shu-t'ung was about to clap his hands and start to sing, when Ying Po-chüeh said to him, "You could sing ten thousand that way, but it wouldn't amount to anything.

If you portray a dragon it must resemble a dragon;
If you portray a tiger it must resemble a tiger.[26]

It won't do unless you step aside and put on your makeup and costume, like the actor who plays the female lead in a play."

Shu-t'ung remained where he was, merely looking to see what Hsi-men Ch'ing's reaction would be.

"You dog!" Hsi-men Ch'ing berated Ying Po-chüeh with a laugh. "All you ever do is give people a hard time."

Then, turning to Shu-t'ung, he said, "Since he's so insistent about it, I'll have Tai-an go out front and ask one of your sister servants for the loan of some clothes. You can come back after stepping aside somewhere to make yourself up for the part."

Tai-an first went to Chin-lien's quarters in the front compound and asked Ch'un-mei for the loan of some things for this purpose, but she refused. He then went to the master suite in the rear compound and approached Yü-hsiao, from whom he succeeded in borrowing four silver hairpins, an ornamental comb, a pin for the front of the coiffure in the shape of a Taoist goddess, a pair of imitation lapis lazuli pendant earrings in gold settings, a blouse of scarlet chiffon that opened down the middle, a green skirt of heavy silk brocade, a purple gold lame headband, and some rouge and powder, with which Shu-t'ung dressed up in the studio until he looked exactly like a woman, made up in the most alluring fashion.

So attired, he returned to the feast and proffered Ying Po-chüeh a cup of wine with both hands. Whereupon:

Commencing to sing in full voice,

he stood to one side and sang a song to the tune "Jade Lotus Blossoms":

Scattered red flowers bob on the water;[27]
The plums on the branch tips are small.
For all this time my eyebrows have grown pale;
  who is there to paint them?
It was the spring that brought this load of
  sorrow in its wake;

Now that spring has gone, why has my sorrow
not dissipated?
Since our separation,
We are parted by distant mountains, distant waters.
Only on your account,
I have calculated the day of your return so often,
I have worn away the tip of my comb.[28]

When Ying Po-chüeh heard this, he indulged in exaggerated compliments without end, saying, “For such a servitor as this, it’s no wonder you see fit to provide him with a bowl of rice. Just listen to that throat of his; it’s a veritable flute. People may praise the singing girls from the licensed quarter, but they stick to the same repertory. We’ve heard it all before. How can any of them sing as mellifluously as this? Brother:



Playing a Female Role Shu-t'ung Entertains Hangers-on

We are not flattering you to your face,
but to have a person like this as your body servant cannot but be a source of gratification to you."

Hsi-men Ch'ing laughed at this, and Ying Po-chüeh said, "Why do you laugh? What I'm saying is perfectly serious. You mustn't let this youngster down. With regard to everything, including his clothing, you should look on him with a favorable eye. It must have been difficult for Magistrate Li to relinquish him to you. It is an indication of his generous feelings toward you."

"It's just as you say," responded Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Nowadays, when I'm not at home, every single requirement in connection with my studio, whether great or small, such as the acceptance of gift cards, the sealing of correspondence, the entertainment of guests, and so forth, is taken care of by him, along with my son-in-law. But my son-in-law also has to look after things in the shop."

When Ying Po-chüeh had drunk the proffered wine, he poured out another two cups and said to Shu-t'ung, "Have a little wine at my behest."

"I wouldn't presume," said Shu-t'ung. "I don't know how to drink."

"If you refuse to drink it," said Ying Po-chüeh, "you'll make me angry. I'm awarding it to you. What is there to be afraid of?"

Shu-t'ung's only response was to fix his eyes on Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"It doesn't matter," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Master Ying the Second is awarding it to you. Go ahead and drink it."

The page boy knelt down on one knee, languidly:

Bending low his powdered neck,

and took a sip of wine from the cup, leaving half a cupful inside, and proffering it in turn to Ying Po-chüeh, who drank it off. Only then did he turn around and offer a cup of wine to Hsieh Hsi-ta, for whom he sang a second song to the same tune.

New lotus blossoms bend in the pond;
Sprinkled with pearly drops of rain.
The fragrant southern breeze disturbs even the
billing swallows and cooing orioles.[29]
Traces of tears transgress the boundaries
of what remains of my makeup;[30]

My waist has so wasted away it is
reminiscent of Hsiao-man's.[31]
Since our separation,
I have suffered a thousand ills, ten thousand ills.[32]
Only on your account,
I have longed so for the day of your return,
I have worn away the jade balustrade.[33]

Hsieh Hsi-ta asked Hsi-men Ch'ing, "Brother, how old is this Book Boy of yours?"

"He has just turned fifteen this year," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Hsieh Hsi-ta then asked him, "How many southern-style songs do you know?"

"I don't know all that many songs," replied Shu-t'ung. "I can only do my best to entertain you gentlemen at your feast."

"What a prepossessing lad," exclaimed Hsieh Hsi-ta, offering him some wine in his turn.

Shu-t'ung then stepped down to wait on Han Tao-kuo, who protested, "His Honor deserves precedence. "How could I presume to take such a liberty with him?"

"Today you're a guest," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Whoever heard of such a thing?" said Han Tao-kuo. "Only after His Honor has been served will I consent to have any wine."

Shu-t'ung stepped over to offer wine to Hsi-men Ch'ing and then proceeded to sing a third song to the same tune.

Beside the eastern hedge chrysanthemums bloom;
By the gilded wellhead the phoenix trees fade.[34]
In the southern bower, sad cries of frontier geese
disturb the breast.
My spring feelings urge me to entrust news of the
plum blossoms to a courier;[35]
But when the migrating geese return, my lover
does not return.
Since our separation,

News has miscarried, tidings have miscarried.
Only on your account,
I have so resented your failure to return,
I have stamped my embroidered shoe out of shape.[36]

When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished drinking, Shu-t'ung moved over in front of Han Tao-kuo, who was so flustered he hastily jumped up to receive the proffered wine.

"You'd better sit down," said Ying Po-chüeh, "so he can feel more comfortable singing."

Only then did Han Tao-kuo sit down, and Shu-t'ung proceeded to sing a fourth song to the same tune.

Filling the heavens the willow catkins fly;
Wings of bees and butterflies wildly cavort.
Atop the ridge the southern branch of the flowering
plums has blossomed.
I should pluck a spray of plum blossoms and entrust it
to the royal courier;
How many times have I paused in my needlework, only
to utter long sighs?
Since our separation,
I have pined for you by day, pined for you by night.
Only on your account,
I have calculated the day of your return so often,
I have worn out the tips of my fingers.[37]

Han Tao-kuo did not even wait for the song to be finished before he hastily took the cup of wine and:

Drained it in one gulp.

While they were drinking, what should they see but Tai-an, who came in and said, "Uncle Pen the Fourth has come and wants to speak to Father."

"Tell him to come in here and speak to me," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Before long Pen the Fourth, wearing a black silk jacket, a sash with a single dangling tassel, and white-soled black boots, came

forward and bowed to the company, after which he was given a seat to one side. Tai-an promptly provided him with a cup and a pair of chopsticks, and Hsi-men Ch'ing then ordered him to go to the rear compound and fetch him a complement of food.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then asked him, "How's the work going on the improvements to our country estate?"

"The front tier of buildings has just been tiled," Pen the Fourth reported. "The foundations for the summerhouses behind them were laid just yesterday. But we still lack the building materials for the anterooms on either side and the living quarters in the rear. We will also need five hundred one-foot two-inch square bricks for the paving of the reception hall and the summerhouses. The old materials won't do. We also lack the large ornamental tiles for the coping on the corners of the wall. We have already used more than a hundred cartloads of dirt in order to lay the foundations and build up the artificial hill, and we will also need twenty taels worth of lime."

"The lime won't be any problem," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "At the yamen tomorrow I'll order the registered lime-burners to deliver it to you. The other day Eunuch Director Liu, the manager of the Imperial Brickyard, promised to let me have some bricks. If you make out a list of what you need and send it to him, along with a few taels of silver, he'll be pretty sure to comply as a partial return favor to me. All that we need now is the lumber."

"The other day," said Pen the Fourth, "you wanted me to go look the situation over at that country estate outside the gate. This morning I dropped by the graveyard to pick up Chang An, and we went to take a look at it. It turned out to be the estate of the distaff relatives of the imperial family named Hsiang. Hsiang the Elder has died, and his younger brother, Hsiang the Fifth, is prepared to sell off even the paved avenue leading to the tombs of his ancestors and the mausoleum. We would hardly want to demand anything like that. In discussing it with him, we agreed that it would suffice for our purposes to pull down the three reception halls, six antechambers, and a tier of auxiliary rooms. His asking price was

five hundred taels, but if we come back to him with three hundred fifty taels in hand, we ought to be able to dismantle what we need. To say nothing of the timber and lumber, the bricks, the tiles, and the dirt alone are worth several hundred taels."

"I wondered who it was you were talking about," said Ying Po-chüeh. "So it's the estate of Hsiang the Fifth. A suit has been brought against him for illegal appropriation of land, and it is being tried by the military intendant of the State Farms Circuit. He has already expended a lot of silver on the suit, and he is also maintaining Lo Ts'un-erh in the licensed quarter, so that, right now, he has managed to end up with no money on hand. If you want what he has to offer, give him three hundred taels of silver for it, and he'll have to settle. After all:

A cold hand can hardly hold onto a hot dumpling;
At whose altar is he to recite the Buddha's name?"

"Tomorrow," Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Pen the Fourth, "take two large ingots of silver with you and, along with Chang An, go to negotiate with him. If he agrees to a selling price of three hundred taels of silver, you can proceed to demolish whatever you need."

"I understand," Pen the Fourth responded.

After some time, a bowl of soup and a platter of steamed pastries was brought out from the rear compound for Pen the Fourth to eat. Wine was poured, and he kept company with the others as they continued to drink. Shu-t'ung sang another song and then stepped into the background.

"There's not much fun in drinking wine this way," said Ying Po-chüeh. "It would be better if we had a dicebox so we could game at forfeits as we drink."

"Go to the Sixth Lady's quarters up front," Hsi-men Ch'ing instructed Tai-an, "and fetch a dicebox for us."

Before long, Tai-an brought a dicebox and put it down in front of Ying Po-chüeh, after which he slipped over to Hsi-men Ch'ing's side and, covering his mouth with his hand, whispered to him, "The baby in the Sixth Lady's room is crying. Ying-ch'un would like you to send someone to fetch the Sixth Lady."

“Put the wine flagon down,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “and quickly go send a page boy to take a lantern and go after her.”

“Where are those two page boys, anyway?” he went on to ask.

“Ch’in-t’ung and Ch’i-t’ung,” said Tai-an, “have already gone off with two lanterns to meet her.”

Ying Po-chüeh saw that there were six dice in the dicebox and, taking up one of them in his hand, said, “I’m going to cast a die, but first, each of you in turn must come up with a line associated with the name of a domino combination, and numbers appropriate to it. When the die is cast, if any of the numbers you have mentioned should match the number on the die, you will have to drink a large cup of wine yourself, as a forfeit, and the next player in line will have to sing a song, or, if he is unable to sing a song, tell a joke. If he is unable to do either of these things, he will definitely have to drink a large cup of wine as a forfeit.”

“You crazy dog!” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “Why make it so complicated?”

“When the master of the revels chooses to fart,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “it must be:

Respectfully received and respectfully acted upon.
You have no jurisdiction over me.”

Then, turning to Lai-an, he said, “You pour a cup, first off, as a forfeit for your master. Only after that can we proceed with our game of forfeits.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing laughed and drank it off.

“Listen up, you all,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “I’m going to start the game, and if I do anything wrong, I, too, will have to pay a forfeit.”

Then he said:

“Young Chang has fallen down drunk
in the western chamber.[38]
How much wine has he consumed;
One large flagon, or
Two small flagons?”

Sure enough, the number that came up when he threw the die was a one spot. Hsi-men Ch'ing called for Shu-t'ung to rejoin them and pour the wine for Ying Po-chüeh's forfeit. Hsieh Hsi-ta, the next player in line, was slated to sing a song.

"I'll sing you a song to the tune 'Plucking the Cassia,' " said Hsieh Hsi-ta, and, clapping his hands to keep time, he sang:

How captivating is this alluring damsel,
just sweet sixteen.
Her every feature is romantic;
In each particular she is hip.[39]
Her brows suggest spring peaks;
Her eyes transmit autumn waters;[40]
Her temples flaunt raven tresses.
In vain do I long for her;
Unable to rid my thoughts of her for
a single hour or half a minute.[41]
Though next to each other;
We are as isolated as if relegated to
the sea's rim or the sky's edge.[42]
I'm getting thin on her account;
I'm getting sick on her account.
Whoever might help us to consummate
our marriage affinity,
Would be a compassionate bodhisattva,
relieving our distress.[43]

Ying Po-chüeh drank his wine and then passed the dicebox to Hsieh Hsi-ta, whose turn it was to cast the die, after which it was Hsi-men Ch'ing's turn to sing.

Hsieh Hsi-ta picked up the die and said:

"Thanks be to Hung-niang[44] for
helping him to bed.
What time is it?
The third night watch,
The fourth period thereof."

It so happened that:

Strange as it may seem,
the number that came up when he threw the die was a four spot.

“Hsieh Hsi-ta will have to drink four cups of wine,” said Ying Po-chüeh.

“Spare me two cups,” said Hsieh Hsi-ta. “I can’t drink that much.”

Shu-t’ung poured out two full cups of wine for him, and he drank off the first cup while waiting for Hsi-men Ch’ing to sing. While this was going on, he and Ying Po-chüeh between them had managed to finish off a whole saucerful of fresh water chestnuts.

“I can’t sing,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “so I’ll tell you a joke instead. A man went into a fruiterer’s shop and asked if he had any torreya nuts for sale. The shopkeeper replied that he did and brought them out for his inspection, whereupon the customer began to put one after another into his mouth without stopping. At this, the shopkeeper demanded to know, ‘If you’re not going to buy them, why are you eating them so assiduously?’ ‘I’m eating them,’ the man said, ‘for their soothing effect on the lungs.’ ‘You may be eating them to soothe your lungs,’ the shopkeeper replied, ‘but it only gives me a case of heartburn.’ ”

Everyone laughed at this.

“Though it give you a case of heartburn,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “bring on another saucer or two. I’m like:

The old matchmaker picking up horse droppings;
As fast as they drop I take them home to dry.”

Hsieh Hsi-ta finished off his remaining cup of wine, after which it was the turn of the third player, Hsi-men Ch’ing, to cast the die.

He said:

“She left behind her gold hairpin
to be a keepsake.
How much did it weigh?
Five or six,
Or seven mace.”

Hsi-men Ch'ing then picked up the die, and the number that came up when he cast it was a five spot. Shu-t'ung poured out two and a half cups of wine for him.

"Brother has a great capacity," exclaimed Hsieh Hsi-ta. "It doesn't make sense that he, too, should get off with only two cups of wine. Brother, you really ought to drink four cups. Just take it that each of us is showing you his respects."

It was now the turn of Han Tao-kuo to sing, but he declined, saying, "I yield to Brother Pen the Fourth's seniority."

"I can't sing," said Pen the Fourth, "so I'll tell you a joke instead."

Hsi-men Ch'ing drank off two cups of wine, after which Pen the Fourth said, "A magistrate was interrogating a suspect in a case of illicit sexual intercourse and asked him, 'Initially, how did you go about violating her?' To which the man replied, 'Her head was facing east, and her feet were also facing east, when I did it.' 'Nonsense,' the magistrate responded. 'How could you do justice to the office with anybody in such a crooked position?' At which point a bystander came forward, knelt down, and said, 'Your Honor, as for that crooked position in the Office of Justice, if there are any openings in that body, I would be happy to fill them.' "[45]

"A fine one you are, Brother Pen the Fourth!" exclaimed Ying Po-chüeh. "You know how to look out for yourself, don't you! After all, His Honor is not yet old. There might be something to be said for anything else, but you can hardly offer yourself as a replacement where his performance in the bedroom is concerned."

When Pen the Fourth heard these words, he was so startled that his face turned crimson with embarrassment.

"Uncle Two," he stammered, "what kind of talk is that! No such thought ever entered my head."

Ying Po-chüeh said, "You've given me the upper hand.

What kind of talk is that?
It's got a sandalwood haft.[46]
Having relinquished the blade,
You've nothing but the sheath."

Pen the Fourth was too uncomfortable to remain where he was but also found it awkward to leave. He felt as though he were:

Sitting on a pincushion.[47]

Hsi-men Ch'ing thereupon proceeded to finish off what remained of his four cups of wine, after which it was Pen the Fourth's turn to cast the die.

Just as he was about to pick up the die, whom should he see but Lai-an, who came in and said, "Uncle Pen the Fourth, there's someone outside looking for you. When I asked him what it was about, he said he was from the kiln."

Pen the Fourth could hardly wait for an excuse to absent himself, so as soon as he heard these words, he disappeared like:

A golden cicada molting its skin.[48]

"Manager Han," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Now that he has gone, it is your turn to cast the die."

Picking up the die, Han Tao-kuo said, "I will comply with the rules.

The old lady took up a rod with which
to chastise Hung-niang.
How many strokes did she give her?
Eight or nine,
Or ten strokes."

"It's my turn to sing," said Ying Po-chüeh, "but instead of singing, I, too, will tell you a joke."

Turning to Shu-t'ung, he said, "Fill up the cups all around the table, including your master's. Then prepare to listen to my joke. A Taoist priest, together with his disciple, were on their way to deliver a written invocation to the house of a donor. When they arrived at the donor's door, the disciple loosened his sash so that his gown hung straight down. When you wear it that way,' his master said, 'it looks as though you don't have any bottom at all.' 'If I didn't have a bottom, Master,' the disciple retorted, turning to face him, 'you wouldn't be able to stand it for a single day.' "

"You perverted dog!" exclaimed Hsi-men Ch'ing.

“One can hardly expect ivory to emerge
from the mouth of a dog.”[49]

We will say no more, for the moment, about how they continued to carouse.

To resume our story, before this Tai-an had gone to the front of the compound and set out with Hua-t’ung, taking a lantern with them, to fetch Li P’ing-erh home from the party at Wu Yüeh-niang’s sister-in-law’s place. When Li P’ing-erh heard that her child was crying back at home, she determined not to wait for the formal presentation of the gifts to the bride and groom, but left her complimentary gift behind, intending to take her leave and set out for home.

Her host, Wu K’ai’s wife, and Wu the Second’s wife were reluctant to let her go, saying, “Whatever you do, at least wait until the formal presentation of the gifts to the bride and groom.”

“Sister-in-law,” said Yüeh-niang, “you don’t understand the situation. It would be better to let her go home. There isn’t anyone there to take care of things, and the baby is really crying for her. The rest of us can stay a little longer without its making any difference.”

Only then did Wu K’ai’s wife consent to let Li P’ing-erh make her departure. Leaving Hua-t’ung behind, Tai-an took Ch’in-t’ung with him, and the two of them accompanied Li P’ing-erh’s sedan chair back home before the rest of the party. Some time later, when the female guests were ready to depart after the formal presentation of the gifts, Yüeh-niang and the others set out for home in their four sedan chairs. They had only one lantern to light their way, and it was the twenty-fourth day of the eighth month, when the moon is dark.

“Where’s the other lantern?” asked Yüeh-niang. “How come there’s only one available?”

“We originally brought two with us,” said Ch’i-t’ung, “but Tai-an demanded one of them and took Ch’in-t’ung with him to accompany the Sixth Lady home before the rest of the party.”

To Yüeh-niang the issue was like a dormant account, not worth pursuing any further, but Chin-lien took it to heart and asked Ch'i-t'ung, "How many lanterns did you bring with you originally?"

"Ch'in-t'ung and I brought two lanterns with us when we came to get you," said Ch'i-t'ung, "but later, when Tai-an showed up with Hua-t'ung, he demanded the use of one of them, took Ch'in-t'ung with him in place of Hua-t'ung, and escorted the Sixth Lady home before the rest of you."

"Did that jailbird, Tai-an, not bring a lantern with him?" Chin-lien demanded to know.

"He and I brought another lantern with us when we came," reported Hua-t'ung.

"Since he already had one, that should have sufficed," said Chin-lien. "Why did he demand this other one of you?"

"That's just what I said to him," reported Ch'i-t'ung, "but he insisted on taking it anyway."

Chin-lien then addressed herself to Wu Yüeh-niang, saying, "Sister, just look at the way that sycophantic slave carries on. When we get home, I'll have something to say to him."

"Why bother?" said Yüeh-niang. "The baby was anxiously awaiting her at home, so he took an extra lantern to escort her back. What of it?"

"Sister," said Chin-lien, "that's not it at all. It doesn't make any difference to me. It's you, as the mistress, who ought not to be so lax in enforcing household discipline. On a bright night it might not matter, but when the moon is as dark as this, how can it be right for four sedan chairs to be lighted by a single lantern?"

As they were speaking, the sedan chairs arrived at the gate, and Yüeh-niang and Li Chiao-erh went back to the rear compound. Chin-lien and Meng Yü-lou got out of their sedan chairs together.

No sooner were they inside than Chin-lien demanded to know, "Where is Tai-an?"

"He's on duty in the rear compound," reported P'ing-an.

He had hardly finished speaking when Tai-an appeared.

Chin-lien gave him a piece of her mind, saying, “I hardly know what to do with you, you sycophantic jailbird! You’d better look out from now on. You may choose to dance attendance only on those who bask in temporary favor, but you’d better watch your step or you’ll slip up. If you already had one lantern, that should have sufficed. Why should you have so far succumbed to delirium as to have insisted on usurping another one, as well as exchanging page boys? You appropriated two lanterns to escort her single sedan chair, while our four sedan chairs only rated a single lantern. Are the rest of us not also Father’s wives?”

“Mother, you’re doing me an injustice,” protested Tai-an. “When Father learned that the baby was crying, he sent me to take a lantern, and go, as quickly as possible, to fetch the Sixth Lady home before the others. He was afraid the baby might cry himself into a serious state. Surely you don’t think that if Father hadn’t sent me, I’d have taken it upon myself to go and fetch her.”

“That’s enough out of you, you jailbird!” said Chin-lien. “He may have sent you to fetch her, but he didn’t tell you to take all the lanterns for yourself. Brother, you’re like:

The sparrow who only flies where the pickings are best.

Make no mistake about it. It’s always wise to:

Add a stick of fuel to the cold stove,
As well as a stick of fuel to the hot.[50]

It’s not as though we are preordained to be out of favor forever.”

“Mother, what are you saying!” protested Tai-an. “If any such thought ever entered my head, may I be thrown from my horse and fracture my breastbone.”

“You deceitful jailbird!” ranted Chin-lien. “Don’t you worry! From now on I’m going to rinse my eyes, the better to keep track of you.”

While still continuing to speak, she and Meng Yü-lou headed back toward the rear compound together.

Tai-an, for his part, turned to his fellow servants and complained, “What a purely provoking business! Father sent me to go fetch her,

and now, for no reason at all, I have to put up with such a tirade from the Fifth Lady."

When Yü-lou and Chin-lien got as far as the ceremonial gate, they ran into Lai-an and asked him, "Where is your father to be found?"

"Father, along with Master Ying the Second, Master Hsieh, and Uncle Han, is in the summerhouse drinking," replied Lai-an. "Shu-t'ung has dressed himself up as a singing girl and is singing for them. You ladies ought to go take a look."

Chin-lien took Yü-lou by the hand and said, "Let's go have a look."

When the two of them went up outside the summerhouse and looked through the latticework, what did they see? Ying Po-chüeh was sitting in the seat of honor, with his cap askew, so drunk that he appeared just like a puppet on its strings.[51] Hsieh Hsi-ta was too drunk to keep his eyes open. Shu-t'ung in his disguise as a singing girl, was standing at their side, pouring the wine, and singing southern-style songs. Hsi-men Ch'ing had surreptitiously instructed Ch'in-t'ung to paint Ying Po-chüeh's face with powder, and surreptitiously slip a garland of straw over his head.

Chin-lien and Yü-lou, as they looked on from outside, couldn't help laughing uncontrollably, exclaiming, "The lousy jailbirds! When they die at some future date, they'll have nothing left to atone for, having already fully exposed their ugliness to view."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard the laughter outside, he sent a page boy out to ask who it was. Only then did the two of them continue on their way to the rear compound. By the time the party broke up, it was already the first watch. That night Hsi-men Ch'ing went into Li P'ing-erh's quarters to sleep.

When Chin-lien returned to her quarters, she asked Ch'un-mei, "When Li P'ing-erh got home today, did she have anything to say?"

"No, she didn't say anything," replied Ch'un-mei.

"Did that shameless good-for-nothing go into her room or not?" Chin-lien went on to ask.

"When the Sixth Lady came home," said Ch'un-mei, "Father paid a visit to her quarters; in fact, he went there twice."

“Was it actually on account of the baby’s crying that he sent someone to fetch her home?” Chin-lien asked.

“In the afternoon the baby did start to cry unusually hard,” said Ch’un-mei. “He cried when he was picked up and cried when he was put down. No one knew what to do.”

“And where did that slave, Shu-t’ung, get the clothes he was dressed up in?” Chin-lien went on to ask.

“At first Tai-an came and tried to get some from me, but I sent him packing,” said Ch’un-mei. “In the end he managed to borrow them from Yü-hsiao in the master suite. It was only after the situation with the baby had been reported to Father in the front compound that he sent the page boys after her.

“Well, if that’s the way it was, I guess that’s all there is to it,” said Chin-lien. “I figured his sending someone to bring her home was just another case of that shameless good-for-nothing sorting people differentially into:

Three classes and nine categories.”

“And if anyone should come after clothes again,” Chin-lien continued, “see that you don’t give any to that ‘sweetie’ of a slave to wear.”

When she had finished speaking, realizing that Hsi-men Ch’ing was not going to come to her quarters that night, she closed the door in a huff and went to bed.

To resume our story, Ying Po-chüeh was already aware that Pen the Fourth was making money from being in charge of the work on Hsi-men Ch’ing’s country estate, and now, on top of that, he heard that the next day he would be going with silver in hand to purchase the demolition rights to the buildings on the estate of that distaff relative of the imperial family, Hsiang the Fifth, from whom, at the very least, he was certain to get a kickback of some taels of silver. So when it happened in the course of the game of forfeits that Pen the Fourth was indiscreet enough to tell such a joke, Ying Po-chüeh took advantage of the occasion to take him to task and thereby give him something to think about.

Sure enough, Pen the Fourth had been frightened. So, the next day, he sealed up three taels of silver and went in person to Ying Po-chüeh's home to kowtow to him.

Affecting an air of innocence, Ying Po-chüeh said, "I haven't done all that much for you. What's all this about?"

"I have been lacking in courtesy with regard to you for some time," said Pen the Fourth. "I only hope that, early and late, you will continue to do what you can to uphold my interests where His Honor is concerned. My gratitude will know no bounds."

Ying Po-chüeh thereupon accepted the silver, entertained him with a cup of tea, and saw him out the door.

Taking the silver with him, he went into the interior of the house and said to his wife:

"If the old man is reluctant to be ruthless,
His old lady will lack even a cotton skirt.

I acted as both advocate and guarantor for that dog-bitten rascal Pen the Fourth, and now that he's gotten his hands on a good piece of business, he:

Hogs the contents of his own ricebowl,

and has no further use for me. His Honor has put him in charge of the work at his country estate, and tomorrow he has commissioned him to take silver in hand and close a deal on the estate of Hsiang the Fifth. He's making money enough and to spare. Yesterday at our drinking party I took him to task for something he said, and he panicked. There was no reason to fear that he wouldn't come seek me out today and present me with these three taels of silver. I'll use them to buy a few bolts of cloth, which should suffice to make winter clothing for our children."

Truly:

He whose hatred is petty is no gentleman;
He who lacks ruthlessness is not a hero.[52]
One merely resents that his idle sorrows
  are such an annoyance;
Before discovering that the foolish fare
  better than the clever.[53]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 36

CHAI CH'IEN SENDS A LETTER ASKING FOR A YOUNG GIRL; HSI-MEN CH'ING PATRONIZES PRINCIPAL GRADUATE TS'AI

From Fu-ch'uan gazing into the distance
west of Chien-chiang;[1]
I see only a solitary cloud formation
blocking the sunset.
The tears that I am wont to shed, are
lost amid the misty trees;
There is no way to transmit a letter,
geese and fish are scarce.
My wish to enquire after you is impeded
by three thousand li;
Separated as we are, I only long in vain
all twenty-four hours.
Broad as the sea and high as Heaven[2]
are my thoughts of you;
On whom can I rely to let you know
the date of my return?

THE STORY GOES that the next day Hsi-men Ch'ing and Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling went out to the suburbs to welcome the new regional investigating censor. He also took the occasion to visit his country estate and reward the construction workers for their services.

That evening, when he arrived home, he had no sooner come in the gate than P'ing-an reported, "Today a courier on his way from Tung-ch'ang prefecture to deliver documents to the capital stopped by to drop off a letter. He said that it was a letter addressed to you from His Honor Chai Ch'ien of the grand preceptor's household. I accepted it and had it taken back to the First Lady's quarters. The messenger will return for an answer tomorrow afternoon."

When Hsi-men Ch'ing heard this, he went back to the master suite, opened the letter, and proceeded to peruse it. What did it have to say?

> Respectfully indited by his devoted servant in the capital, Chai Ch'ien, for the perusal of the newly promoted officer of the Embroidered Uniform Guard His Honor Hsi-men Ch'ing:
>
> I have long admired your lofty eminence without having had the opportunity to meet you in person. As the repeated recipient of your lavish kindness, my sense of indebtedness knows no bounds. The instructions which you formerly transmitted to me are imprinted in my heart. In all things I will do everything in my power to uphold your interests where His Honor is concerned.
>
> As for that trifling matter that I made bold to trouble you with by means of your esteemed servant, I imagine that you have already taken care of it for me. At present, taking advantage of a convenient messenger, I present you with my card and ten taels of silver as an inadequate expression of my esteem, as well as my concern for your well-being. I respectfully hope that you will see fit to vouchsafe me a reply, for which:
>
> My gratitude will be impossible to contain.[3]
>
> In addition, the new principal graduate Ts'ai, who is His Honor's adopted son, has received an imperial dispensation to return to his native place in order to visit his parents. His route will take him by your honorable place of abode, and I hope that you may be able to entertain him for a meal, a favor that he likewise will never dare to forget. Such is my earnest supplication.
>
> Indited one day after the solar term Autumn Begins.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished reading the letter, he sighed incessantly, saying, "Quickly, send a page boy to summon a matchmaker. What have I been doing to completely forget such a thing as this and allow it to slip out of my mind?"

"What is it?" asked Wu Yüeh-niang. "Tell me about it."

"Chai Ch'ien," Hsi-men Ch'ing replied, "the majordomo of His Honor the grand preceptor's household in the Eastern Capital, sent me a letter some time ago saying that he was without a son, and

asking me if I could seek out a young girl hereabouts, no matter whether she be rich or poor, cost being no object, since all he cares about is that she be healthy. He wants her for the purpose of procreation. He said that no matter what the dowry and bride price might be, I should simply send him an itemized account, and he would promptly remit the silver. He promised that in the future he would do everything in his power to uphold my interests where His Honor is concerned with regard to my official career. I've been so busy for some time, what with assuming office and:

Seven of this and eight of that,[4]

that I completely forgot about it and allowed it to slip out of my mind. Lai-pao, also, has been going to the shop every day and has failed to remind me.



Chai Ch’ien Sends a Letter Asking for a Young Girl

“Today, far away as he is, he has sent someone to deliver a letter asking how the nuptial arrangements are going, and also enclosing ten taels of silver in lieu of a congratulatory present. Tomorrow,

when the courier comes for his answer, how am I to reply? He'll be as annoyed as can be.

"When the matchmaker comes, tell her, for better or for worse, to seek out such a person for him as fast as possible. He doesn't care whether the status of the family is high or low, as long as the girl is healthy. A fourteen- or fifteen-year-old, or even a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old, would do. Whatever the bride price may be, I will take care of it. Or, better yet, we could take Hsiu-ch'un from Li P'ing-erh's quarters-she's not bad looking- and give her to him."

"I must say," exclaimed Yüeh-niang, "Are your legs on fire, you good-for-nothing? What have you been doing with yourself the last two or three months? When someone makes such a request of you, you ought to look for a genuine virgin on his behalf if you expect him to be grateful. As for that maidservant, you've already had your way with her, so how could it be appropriate to send her? If you take his request seriously, he'll exert his efforts on your behalf in the future. Right now you're trying to:

Sculpt a Buddhist effigy on the one hand,
While burning incense to it on the other.
Into such turbulent water you can hardly
hope to insert an oar.

It's not like setting out to purchase something, when you can simply take your silver to the marketplace and buy it. Even young girls brought up in the women's quarters are not all the same. You've got to give the matchmaker time to deliberately make her rounds and size up the possibilities. You talk about it as nonchalantly as though it were an easy matter."

"Tomorrow, when he comes for an answer," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "what am I to tell him?"

"It's a wonder that someone like you, who is accustomed to adjudicating matters, should be at a loss to handle someone in a matter of this kind," said Yüeh-niang. "When that man comes tomorrow, give him a generous tip, and send him off with a written reply. All you need to say is that you've found a girl for him, but that her trousseau and dowry have not been entirely taken care of

yet, and that you'll send someone from here to escort her on her way as soon as the preparations are complete. In the meantime, it won't be too late for you to delegate someone here to look for a suitable prospect. Thereby, you will:

Accomplish two objectives with a single act,[5]

bring about a favorable outcome, and feel that you have complied appropriately with his request."

"You've got a point there," Hsi-men Ch'ing said with a smile.

He then proceeded to send for Ch'en Ching-chi and instructed him to write the reply overnight.

The next day, when the courier arrived, Hsi-men Ch'ing went out to interview him in person and asked, "When will the principal graduate Ts'ai's boat get here, so that I can prepare to receive him?"

"When I left," the man said, "His Honor Ts'ai had just taken leave of the court and was preparing to start out from the capital. Majordomo Chai said that he feared His Honor Ts'ai might be temporarily short of funds for the trip home, and that he hoped you might be good enough to lend him something, for which he would undertake to reimburse you if you wrote him the amount required."

"Tell His Honor Chai," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "that no matter what he might need, I will:

Not fail to comply with his orders."

Having finished speaking, he directed Ch'en Ching-chi to usher him into an antechamber and entertain him with food and wine. When he was ready to leave, he turned the reply over to him and gave him five taels for his traveling expenses. The courier bowed in thanks, went happily out the gate, and set out on his long journey. Truly:

When thoughts are pressing one wants to wave
  the flying squirrel flag;
When the mind is eager one beats to tatters
  the purple flowered whip.[6]

Gentle reader take note: Originally An Ch'en[7] had been placed at the head of the list in the *chin-shih* examinations, but the censors had argued that because he was the younger brother of An Tun,[8] the

grand councilor of a previous reign whose name had been proscribed, he could not be designated the first scholar of the realm. Emperor Hui-tsung thus had no alternative but to elevate Ts'ai Yün[9] to the number one position in his stead. Having been designated the principal graduate, he had offered himself as a protégé to Ts'ai Ching and been accepted as his adopted son. He had thereupon been appointed to a position as proofreader in the Palace Library and granted permission to return home in order to visit his parents.

To resume our story, Wu Yüeh-niang despatched page boys from the household to summon Old Mother Feng, Auntie Hsüeh, and other matchmakers, whom she directed to enquire everywhere for any family that had a healthy young daughter, so they could obtain a card with her vital statistics and discuss the match. But no more of this.

One day Hsi-men Ch'ing despatched Lai-pao to the port on the New Canal to wait for the arrival of Principal Graduate Ts'ai's boat. It so happens that he was traveling on the same boat with his fellow *chin-shih* graduate An Ch'en. This metropolitan graduate An Ch'en, because his family was too poor, had been unable to find a second wife. He had:

> Lost out on the east, and
> Fallen short on the west,

as a consequence of which, he, too, had taken leave of the court and was on his way home to seek a second wife. For this reason the two of them were traveling on the same boat.

When they arrived at the port on the New Canal, Lai-pao went aboard with Hsi-men Ch'ing's calling card and presented them with a gift for the road consisting of wine, noodles, chicken and goose delicacies, salt, soy sauce, and the like.

On top of all this, while Ts'ai Yün was still in the Eastern Capital, Chai Ch'ien had already said to him, "In Ch'ing-ho district there is a certain Battalion Commander Hsi-men Ch'ing who is also one of His Honor's protégés. He presides over a prominent family and is one of those who is:

> Wealthy yet observant of the rites.[10]

As a result of His Honor's patronage, he currently holds a post as a judicial commissioner. When you arrive there, he is certain to entertain you lavishly."

Since this information was already:

Firmly fixed in his mind,

When Ts'ai Yün saw that Hsi-men Ch'ing had sent his servant some distance to welcome him, and that he had also provided such a generous present, he was completely delighted.

The next day, when they arrived at Ch'ing-ho, he and his fellow metropolitan graduate, An Ch'en, went into the town to call upon Hsi-men Ch'ing. Hsi-men Ch'ing, for his part, had already engaged a cook to prepare a feast on his premises. Because he had attended a party in the yamen of District Magistrate Li Ta-t'ien, where he had been impressed by the singing of a troupe of Su-chou actors, he had asked Shu-t'ung about them and been told that they were staying at Mo-tzu Ying-erh outside the South Gate. He had consequently engaged the services of four of them for the occasion.

Principal Graduate Ts'ai Yün that day had wrapped up and sealed a chiffon kerchief, a book, and a pair of shoes with cloud patterned toes, while Metropolitan Graduate An Ch'en had also prepared the customary book and kerchief, four bags of tender leaf tea, and four Hang-chou fans as presentation gifts. Both of them wore their official robes and black silk hats as they sent in their calling cards. Hsi-men Ch'ing, in formal attire, came out and ushered them into the reception hall, where they went through the social amenities and exchanged bows of salutation. Only after a servant had presented their gifts did they consent to sit down in the positions appropriate for guests and host.

Principal Graduate Ts'ai Yün initiated the proceedings by raising his hand, inclining his body in his host's direction, and saying, "Worthy Sir, Chai Ch'ien in the capital was loud in your praise as the:

Distinguished scion of a prominent house,[11]

one of the great lineages of Ch'ing-ho. We have long admired your virtue and reputation without having the opportunity to make your

acquaintance. Now that we have been enabled to pay our respects beneath your hall, we are fortunate indeed."

"You do me too much honor," responded Hsi-men Ch'ing. "The other day I received a letter from Chai Ch'ien stating that the equipages of you two venerable gentlemen might condescend to come my way. I should certainly have gone forth to welcome you had I not been prevented from doing so by my official responsibilities. I hope that you will be magnanimous enough to forgive me."

"Might I enquire as to the native places and courtesy names of you two gentlemen?" he went on to ask.

"Your pupil is named Ts'ai Yün," replied Principal Graduate Ts'ai. "Though I currently reside in K'uang-lu, my native place is Ch'u-chou. My courtesy name is I-ch'üan, or One Spring. I have been lucky enough to be designated principal graduate and have received an appointment as proofreader in the Palace Library. I have been given an imperial dispensation granting me permission to return home and visit my parents. Not having anticipated Chai Ch'ien's praise of your surpassing virtue, I fear I have been tardy in paying my respects."

"Your pupil is a native of Ch'ien-t'ang district in Chekiang," said Metropolitan Graduate An, "and my courtesy name is Feng-shan. I currently hold a position as observer in the Ministry of Works and have also been granted permission to return home in order to seek a second wife. May I make bold to enquire, Worthy Sir, as to your distinguished courtesy name?"

"I am but a low-ranking official occupying a military office," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing. "How could I presume to affect a courtesy name?"

Only after being pressed repeatedly did he say, "My courtesy name is Ssu-ch'üan, or Four Springs. Thanks to repeated acts of patronage on the part of His Honor Ts'ai Ching, and the support of Chai Ch'ien, I have been granted the rank of battalion commander in the Embroidered Uniform Guard and occupy a post as a judicial

commissioner, for which, if the truth must be known, I am hardly qualified."

"Worthy Sir," responded Principal Graduate Ts'ai," you are:

A man of no ordinary ambition.[12]

Your reputation for elegance is well-known. There is no need to be so self-effacing."

When they had finished with the social amenities, Hsi-men Ch'ing invited his guests to visit the summerhouse in his garden so they could loosen their formal clothing and relax, but Principal Graduate Ts'ai declined, saying, "My desire to return home is pressing, my boat is moored by the shore, and I feel compelled to be on my way. But having had the pleasure of contemplating your distinguished countenance, I do not wish to depart precipitously. What is to be done? What is to be done?"

"If you two gentlemen will condescend not to reject my snail-like abode," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I humbly beseech you to plant your literary banners here for the nonce, that I may detain you for the space of a meal, and thereby gratify my desire to offer you a meager entertainment."

"Since that is your gracious desire," responded Principal Graduate Ts'ai, "your pupils will comply with your command."

Thereupon, divesting themselves of their formal robes, the two of them sat down, while the attendants served another round of tea. Ts'ai Yün took advantage of the occasion to visually survey Hsi-men Ch'ing's premises.

Noting that the garden pools and decorated pavilions, the secluded luxuriance of the flowers and trees:

Stretched before them as far as the eye could see,

he was delighted by the prospect and:

Expressing the most fulsome admiration,

remarked hyperbolically, "Truly, a vista to rival the Isles of the Blest."

Thereupon, a table with an inlaid chessboard on its surface was set before them, and they commenced a game.

“I happen to have a couple of actors in attendance today,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “to enhance the pleasures of the feast.”

“Where are they?” asked Metropolitan Graduate An. “Why not tell them to come in so we can have a look at them?”

In no time at all, the four actors knelt down and kowtowed to them.

“Which two play the leading male and female roles?” asked Principal Graduate Ts’ai. “And what are their names?”

Thereupon, a member of the troupe came forward, and said, “I play the leading male roles, and my name is Kou Tzu-hsiao. That one over there plays the leading female roles, and he is called Chou Shun. This one, who plays subsidiary female roles, is called Yüan Yen. And that one, who plays young male lead roles, is called Hu Ts’ao.”

“Where are you actors from?” asked Metropolitan Graduate An.

“We are all natives of Su-chou,” replied Kou Tzu-hsiao.

“Make yourselves up and come perform something for us,” said Metropolitan Graduate An.

When the four actors retired to put on their makeup, Hsi-men Ch’ing directed that female clothing, hairpins, and combs should be fetched from the rear compound and told Shu-t’ung to get dressed up with the rest. As a result, there were three actors playing female roles, and two playing males. The first piece they played was from the southern-style ch’uan-ch’i drama entitled *Hsiang-nang chi* (The scent bag).

Two place settings were provided for Principal Graduate Ts’ai and Metropolitan Graduate An at the upper end of the reception hall, while Hsi-men Ch’ing occupied the position of host below in order to keep them company. As they continued their drinking, the actors performed a scene from the play and then came over to join them.

Shu-t’ung’s performance in a junior female role caught the eye of Metropolitan Graduate An, who asked, “And where does this actor come from?”

“This is my paltry servant, Shu-t’ung,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Calling him over, Metropolitan Graduate An rewarded him with a drink of wine, saying, “This youngster is absolutely marvelous. He could not be improved upon.”

Principal Graduate Ts’ai also called the other performers over and rewarded them with wine, saying, “How about singing that song to the tune “New Year’s Audience” that begins with the words:

Beside the flowers, beside the willows.”

Kou Tzu-hsiao responded by standing to one side, clapping his hands to keep time, and singing:

Beside the flowers, beside the willows,
Beyond the eaves threads of gossamer curl.
Before the mountains, before the waters,
On horseback the eastern breeze is soft.
I sigh that the course of my journey,
Is like that of tumbling tumbleweed.
Though I gaze longingly toward my native place,
The geese are distant, the fish are submerged.[13]
The sorrow of separation fills my breast,
but who is there to transmit it?
Like the day lily, my mother’s days are short.
My dreaming soul is drawn to her in vain.
Chorus:
Lo-yang is far away,
When will I ever ascend to the golden halls
of the nine-gated palace?[14]

When he had finished singing the first song, he went on to sing the next song in the suite, to the same tune as before:

Ten years have I toiled at blue lamp and yellow scrolls,[15]
Applying myself by firefly light at study window.[16]
At snow-lit desk I have expended studious effort,[17]
Hoping to shed honor on my family,
And bring added luster to my name.

I will enter the lists in the literary tournament.
Having mastered the three thousand rules of deportment,[18]
The five hundred successful heroes will contend
for their standings in the rank.
Quickly apply Tsu T'i's whip,[19]
The sooner to earn an audience with the emperor.
Chorus:
Lo-yang is far away,
When will I ever ascend to the golden halls
of the nine-gated palace?[20]

Metropolitan Graduate An addressed himself to Kou Tzu-hsiao, saying, "Do you know the song from the play *Yü-huan chi* (The story of the jade ring), which begins with the words:

Your kindness and virtue are without bounds?"

"That's a song to the tune 'Prelude to Painted Eyebrows,' " replied Kou Tzu-hsiao. "I do know it."

Your kindness and virtue are without bounds.
My feelings at meeting my new parents
are not shallow.
I am fortunate to be able to entrust my life to you,
Who have also granted me your daughter in marriage.
This meeting of wind and cloud[21] will enable me to
take flight on some future day;
This mating of male and female phoenix will lead to
inseparable harmony here and now.
Chorus:
Clearly they are not husband and wife
for this life alone,
In a former life jade was planted in Indigo Field.[22]

Shu-t'ung poured a round of drinks and then, clapping his hands to keep time, proceeded to sing the next song in the suite, to the same tune as before:

My tender body has just come of age.
The profoundness of my parents' kindness[23]
  is as vast as the heavens.
Blushing at my inability to repay them,
This heart of mine is entangled.
For this mating of the mandarin ducks
  I am bathed in their kindness.
Serving my husband with dustpan and broom,
  I look forward to his success.
Chorus:
Clearly they are not husband and wife
  for this life alone,
In a former life jade was planted in Indigo Field.[24]

It so happens that Metropolitan Graduate An Ch'en, as a native of Hang-chou, was enamored of the "southern breeze."[25] When he saw how well Shu-t'ung could sing, he pulled him over by the hand and the two of them passed the same cup of wine back and forth between them as they drank.

After some time, the wine ran out, and Hsi-men Ch'ing escorted them on a tour of the garden, after which they returned to the summerhouse and played a game of chess. He ordered a page boy to fetch two partitioned tabletop boxes containing thirty varieties of delicacies, fresh things in season, and so forth, for them to enjoy with their wine.

"Your pupils have just met you for the first time," said Principal Graduate Ts'ai Yün. "We really ought not to be the cause of any further inconvenience in your secluded mansion. It is growing late, and we had better bid you farewell."

"Whoever heard of such a thing?" said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Are you two gentlemen, when you depart, planning to return to your boat?" he went on to ask.

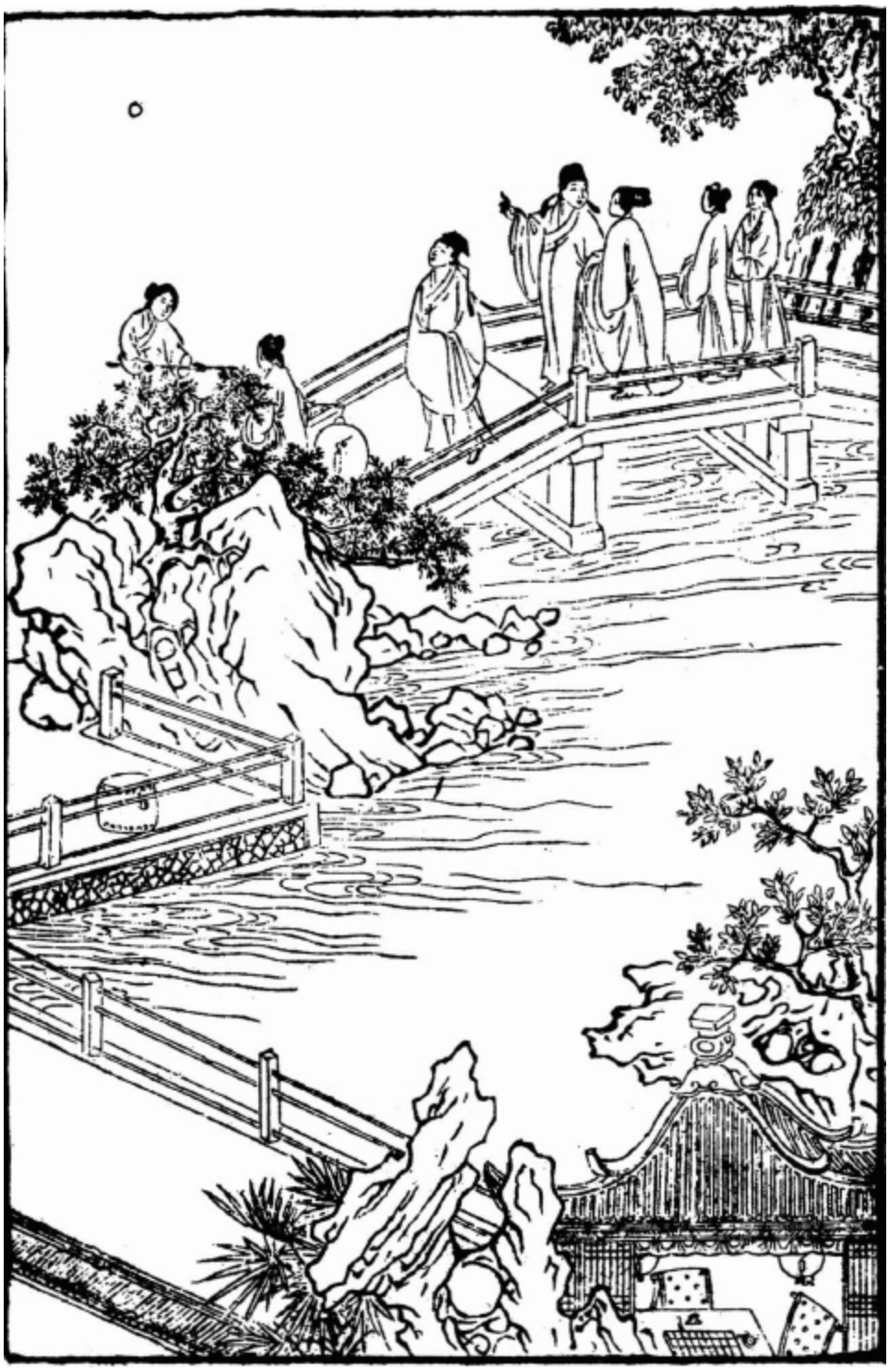
"We have arranged to avail ourselves of temporary quarters in the Buddhist Temple of Eternal Felicity outside the South Gate," replied Principal Graduate Ts'ai.

“Right now,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “even if you are only going outside the gate, it’s rather late. The best thing to do would be to keep a couple of your retainers here to wait on you, and send the rest back there, with instructions to return and fetch you in the morning. That way we could both have the opportunity to fully express our feelings.”

“Although it is an indication of your love of hospitality, Worthy Sir,” said Principal Graduate Ts’ai, “how can we avoid putting you to inordinate inconvenience?”

Thereupon the two of them directed all of their retainers, on the one hand, to return to the Buddhist temple outside the gate to spend the night, and, on the other, to bring horses to fetch them early the next morning. The crowd of retainers assented and took their leave. But no more of this.

The two of them played two games of chess in the summerhouse. The actors performed another two scenes from the play for their entertainment, after which Hsi-men Ch’ing, fearing that it was getting late, paid them for their services and sent them on their way. He only retained Shu-t’ung to pour the wine and wait on them at the feast. Gradually, as they continued drinking, it became time to light the lamps, and the two of them went outside to adjust their toilets.



Hsi-men Ch’ing Patronizes Principal Graduate Ts’ai

Drawing Hsi-men Ch’ing aside with his hand, Principal Graduate Ts’ai said to him, “Your pupil, on this return home to visit his

parents, is somewhat short of traveling expenses."

"Venerable Sir," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "there is no need for you to remind me. You can be sure that I will faithfully comply with Chai Ch'ien's esteemed behest."

After some time, he ushered his two guests back into the flower garden, saying, "There is another cozy little structure I would like you to see."

Showing the way to the two of them, he skirted the juniper hedge until he came to the "snow cave" in that secluded nook, the Hidden Spring Grotto. The interior was brightly illuminated with lamps and candles, and on a low zither stand there had already been laid out a lavish spread of delicacies and wine.

The couches and beds were precisely right;
Zither and books were elegantly displayed.

The drinking party was resumed, and Shu-t'ung was there to entertain them with his singing.

"Do you happen to know the song that begins with the words:

Red has entered into the palace peaches?"

asked Principal Graduate Ts'ai.

"That's a song to the tune "Moon over the Brocaded Hall," said Shu-t'ung. "I know it."

"Since you do know it," said Principal Graduate Ts'ai, "sing it for us."

Thereupon, after pouring another round of wine, Shu-t'ung, adopting a southern style of delivery, clapped his hands to keep time and sang:

Red has entered into the palace peaches,
Green has returned to the royal willows.
Orioles sing in the imperial park during early spring.
Blinds are rolled up to admit the eastern breeze,[26]
In silken garments the morning chill is still sharp.
Blessed that an immortal maiden has seen fit to
give a letter to the blue bird;[27]

I recall the kindness of my solicitous mother,
in emulation of the black crow.[28]
Chorus:
The prospect is beautiful.
I only wish our human situation were an eternal spring;
So we could prolong our revels on the Isles of the Blest.[29]

When Metropolitan Graduate An heard this performance, he was:

Unable to contain his delight,[30]

and, remarking to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "This youngster is deserving of respect," he raised his cup of wine and drank it off at one gulp.

Shu-t'ung, attired in:

Turquoise sleeves and red skirt,

and adorned with a gold lamé headband:

Lifting high a jade goblet,

offered up the wine and sang, to the same tune as before:

Hard to repay, our mother's exertions,
Her maternal kindness is without limit.
May she live as long as Red Pine and Wang-tzu Ch'iao.[31]
To wait upon her morning and evening,
Among my kin, there is my elder brother's wife.
In the spring breeze, the flowers of the cherry trees[32]
share their fragrance;
In the evening of the year, the pine and the cypress
maintain their integrity.
Chorus:
The prospect is beautiful.
I only wish our human situation were an eternal spring.
So we could prolong our revels on the Isles of the Blest.[33]

That evening they continued drinking until the middle of the night before retiring to rest. In both the Hidden Spring Grotto and the Kingfisher Pavilion, Hsi-men Ch'ing had provided beds and curtains and supplied quilts and mattresses of satin and brocade. After having deputed the two page boys, Shu-t'ung and Tai-an, to

wait upon his guests, Hsi-men Ch'ing bade them good night and returned to the rear compound.

The next day, the attendants of Principal Graduate Ts'ai and Metropolitan Graduate An came to fetch them with bearers, sedan chairs, and horses. Hsi-men Ch'ing had a repast prepared for his guests in the reception hall and provided platters of assorted snacks, wine, and rice for their servitors. He had the two page boys bring forth his parting gifts in square boxes. For Principal Graduate Ts'ai there were a piece of satin brocade, two pieces of spun silk fabric for collar facings, five hundred pellets of storax, and a hundred taels of silver. For Metropolitan Graduate An there were a piece of variegated satin, one piece of spun silk fabric for collar facings, three hundred pellets of storax, and thirty taels of silver.

Principal Graduate Ts'ai repeatedly refused to accept the proffered gift, saying, "A loan of merely thirty taels would be sufficient. What need is there for such prodigality, and with your generous gifts to boot?"

"It is fitting that my fellow graduate should accept," said Metropolitan Graduate An, "but it would hardly be appropriate for me to do so."

"It is but a paltry gift," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "no more than an expression of my feelings on this occasion, Venerable Sir, of your triumphant return home in order to remarry. It is my humble hope that it may serve to alleviate the cost of a cup of tea."

Thereupon, the two of them both got up from their places to express their thanks, saying:

"These sentiments, this kindness,
When will they ever be forgotten?"[34]

After which, instructing their retainers to accept the gifts and put them away in their felt bags, they took their leave of Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "Once your pupils have departed, we will be:

At opposite ends of the world.[35]

Temporarily absenting ourselves from your instruction, on our return to the capital at some future date:

Should we advance but an inch in our careers,[36]

we will naturally feel obliged to repay your generosity."

"Though we must part today," said Metropolitan Graduate An, "I trust that on some future occasion we will have the opportunity to reciprocate by receiving your distinguished countenance."

"Though you have condescended to visit your pupil's snail-like abode," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I fear you have experienced but too shabby a reception. I hope that you will be considerate enough to overlook it. I really ought to see you off for some distance were it not for the responsibilities of my office. I must therefore bid you a premature farewell."

Accompanying his two visitors as far as the gate, he watched as they mounted their horses and departed. Truly:

> Having won the right of "returning to one's
> home in brocade robes";[37]
> Such success alone "enables one to believe
> that he is a real man."[38]
>
> If you want to know the outcome of these events,
> Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 37

OLD MOTHER FENG URGES THE MARRIAGE OF HAN AI-CHIEH; HSI-MEN CH'ING ESPOUSES WANG LIU-ERH AS A MISTRESS

Time passes languidly aboard the light vessels
on the waterways of Wu;
Parting cups were refilled and you indulgently
supported my unsteady gait.
On the blue sea you may be assailed by sorrow
as light flickers lambently;
Among scattered peaks I can hardly object to
the colors of divergent shades.
As you are propelled forward by your orchid oars
how full are your feelings;
While I am reduced to leaning on the balustrade
as the sun sets in the west.
Amid misty waves, so near and yet so far, how vast
is the distance between us;
There is no need for you to harbor in your breast
a sense of redoubled sadness.

THE STORY GOES that Hsi-men Ch'ing saw off Principal Graduate Ts'ai and Metropolitan Graduate An as they made their departure.

One day, as he was riding on horseback, wearing his eye shades and preceded by an escort who shouted to clear the way, he ran into Old Mother Feng.

He sent a page boy to call her to a halt and question her, saying, “Father says to ask you how things are going with that girl you were commissioned to look for. Why haven’t you come to the house to report on it?”

The old woman promptly stepped up to him and said, “These last few days, although I’ve looked over a number of prospects, all of them were the daughters of butchers or carriers, about whom it would not have been appropriate to report back to you. Who could have anticipated that:

As providence would have it,

there has been a girl from a suitable family right before my eyes all along, that I simply failed to remember. She’s as talented as she can be and was born in the year of the horse, so next year she’ll be just fourteen years old. If I hadn’t passed by her place yesterday and been invited in for a cup of tea by her mother, who was standing at the door, I wouldn’t have had the chance to see her. It hasn’t been more than a few days since she’s started to put up her hair in a cloud-shaped chignon. Her posture is as straight as the handle of a writing brush. She has two tiny bound feet. Her face is heavily made up, and she’s got a little bit of a mouth. In fact, she’s as captivating as an elf.

“Her mother says that she was born on the Dragon Boat Festival on the fifth day of the fifth month, and her informal name is Ai-chieh, or Love. Quite aside from the fact that she appears to be lovable to us womenfolk, if you were to set eyes on her yourself, sir, you’d fall in love with her to I know not what extent.”

“What a crazy old crone you are!” exclaimed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “What would I want with her for no good reason? I’ve got more than enough of that sort of thing at home as it is. The truth of the matter is that Master Chai Ch’ien, the majordomo of Grand Preceptor Ts’ai Ching’s household in the Eastern Capital, is looking for a concubine, with a view to procreation, and asked me to see if I could find one for him. If you can come up with a prospect that satisfies him, it will certainly redound to your benefit.”

“Who’s daughter is it?” he went on to ask. “See if you can get a card from them with the year, month, day, and hour of her birth, and bring it to me to look at.”

“Who’s family does she belong to?” said Old Mother Feng. “I’ll tell you all about it, sir.

Distant, it is not a thousand li;
Close, it is but a stone’s throw.[1]

It’s not as though she were anyone else. She’s the daughter of Han Tao-kuo, the manager of your silk goods shop. If you want to take a look at her, just wait until I’ve had a word with her old man, obtained the card with her vital statistics, and settled on a day, and you can go see for yourself.”

“If you can manage it thus and so,” Hsi-men Ch’ing instructed her, “go ahead and speak to him about it, and, if he agrees, get the card with her vital statistics, and come back to my place to report on the situation.”

The old woman assented to this and went her way.

Two days later, when Hsi-men Ch’ing was sitting in the front reception room, he suddenly caught sight of Old Mother Feng, who had come back to report to him. She handed him the card with the girl’s vital statistics, which read, “The young woman, née Han, is fourteen years old and was born on the fifth day of the fifth month, at midnight.”

“I told her old man what you had said to me,” she reported, “and he replied that if Your Honor should see fit to show her such favor, it would also be his daughter’s good fortune. The only problem is that his household is poor, so they don’t have the wherewithal to handle the necessary expenses.”

“Tell him,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “that it won’t cost him so much as a thread in the way of expenditure. Everything required in the way of clothing, jewelry, trousseau, furniture, etc., will be taken care of by me, and I’ll even provide him with twenty taels of silver in the way of a bride price on behalf of the groom. Tell him that if his household takes care of no more than her shoes and

footbindings, that will suffice. When the time comes, I'll also arrange to have her old man escort her to the Eastern Capital.

"Her status will not be comparable to that of an ordinary concubine. Majordomo Chai is seeking a mate with a view to procreation and may well treat her like a wife. If his daughter should be fortunate enough to bear him so much as:

A single boy or half a girl,[2]

there is no reason to doubt that she would end up enjoying great wealth and distinction."

"They would like to know," asked Old Mother Feng, "when you will pay them a visit in order to have a look at her, so they can prepare themselves accordingly."

"As long as they are agreeable," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I'll just go over there tomorrow and take a look at her. He's been sending me one letter after another, he's so anxious about it. Tell them not to make any special preparations for me. I'll just drink a cup of clear tea and be on my way."

"Your Honor," said Old Mother Feng, "you're:

Waxing supercilious before you enter the door.

Though what they provide may not amount to anything special, you ought to stay and sit for a while. Since it's your own employee's home, you can hardly expect them to skimp if you pay them a visit."

"You've got it all wrong," protested Hsi-men Ch'ing. "What you don't understand is that I've got other things to do."

"If that's the way it's to be," said Old Mother Feng, "I'll go tell them about it."

She then betook herself to Han Tao-kuo's house and told his wife, Wang Liu-erh, word for word, everything that had been arranged, saying, "His Honor, back at his residence, took a look at the card with your daughter's vital statistics and was as pleased as could be. He says that it won't cost you so much as a thread in the way of expenditure. Everything required in the way of dowry and trousseau will be taken care of at his place, and he'll even provide you with twenty taels of silver in the way of a bride price on behalf of the groom. All you'll need to do is to make sure that your daughter is

supplied with the customary handmade shoes and footbindings for the occasion. When the day arrives, he'll even arrange for your husband to escort her to her new home. And if, by any chance, your daughter should become pregnant in:



Old Mother Feng Urges the Marriage of Han Ai-chieh

A year or half a year,[3]

it will be a piece of good luck for your entire family, and there is no reason to doubt that you will end up enjoying great wealth and distinction.

"Tomorrow, when his stint at the yamen is over, he'll pay you a visit in order to take a look at her. He says that you shouldn't make any special preparations for him, or expect him to stay for long; that he'll just drink a cup of tea, have a look at her, and be on his way."

"Really, Mother," said Wang Liu-erh. "You wouldn't tell me a story, would you?"

"Surely you don't mean to suggest that, if your employer had not spoken thus, I would come and try to put one over on you. It's not as though he's got nothing else to do. At his place:

People come and people go,
Altogether without ceasing."

When the woman heard these words, she got together some wine and food for the old lady and then sent her on her way with the injunction, "Come and help me out first thing tomorrow."

That evening, when Han Tao-kuo got home, the woman settled the arrangements for the morrow with him. In the morning, he got up early and went to Kao-ching, or High Well,[4] to order a carrier-load of sweet water, and he also bought some premium-grade nuts, which he left off at home before setting out for the shop to conduct his business.

He left his wife at home:

Alluringly dressed and heavily made up,

decked out in such a way as to make a spectacle of herself. She took the trouble to:

Wash her hands and trim her nails,

before wiping clean the cups and goblets, shelling the nuts, and brewing some good tea, as she awaited the advent of Hsi-men Ch'ing. Old Mother Feng had already showed up to make sure everything was ready for her visitor.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing was through with his duties at the yamen, he went home to change into informal clothes, donned a "loyal and tranquil hat,"[5] mounted his horse, put on his eye shades, and, accompanied by the two page boys, Tai-an and Ch'in-t'ung, proceeded straight to Han Tao-kuo's house, where he dismounted and went in.

Old Mother Feng hastened to invite him inside and gave him a seat. After some time, Wang Liu-erh, leading her daughter Ai-chieh, came out to greet him. Hsi-men Ch'ing hardly bothered to look at the daughter but couldn't take his eyes off the woman. He saw that, above, she was wearing a jacket of purple satin, a jet silk vest, and a jade-colored skirt, beneath which appeared the up-turned tips of her two feet, enclosed in black satin shoes with gold spangled toes. She was tall of stature and had a rosewood complexion and a face shaped like a melon seed, the temples of which were adorned with two long spit curls. Truly:

Before knowing what she's like on the inside,
One observes how slickly she is tricked out.

Behold:

Glossy and smooth,
Without benefit of makeup,[6]
By nature, her demeanor is alluring.[7]
Slender and graceful,[8]
Too indolent to use powder,
Innately, her persona is enchanting.[9]
Her two eyebrows resemble distant hills;
Her pair of eyes are like autumn waters.[10]
Her sandalwood mouth is barely open;
Attractive enough to drive bees to distraction
and butterflies to madness.
Her slender waist is constricted;
Covertly suggesting thoughts
of breezes and moonlight.
If she is not Ts'ui Ying-ying
bent on an assignation;[11]

She must surely be Cho Wen-chün
appreciating the zither.[12]

When Hsi-men Ch'ing saw her:

His heart was agitated and his eyes disturbed,

to such an extent that:

He was unable to control himself.
From his mouth no word was uttered, but
In his heart he thought to himself,

"So this is the sort of woman Han Tao-kuo keeps in his house. No wonder that bunch of scamps the other day were out to molest her."

He also noticed that her daughter cut quite a striking figure and thought to himself, "With a mother who looks like that, how could her daughter be anything but good-looking?"

The woman made him an obeisance, after which she instructed her daughter, Ai-chieh, to come over. Facing Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Like a sprig of blossoms swaying in the breeze;
Sending the pendants of her embroidered sash flying,

she kowtowed to him four times, after which she got up and stood in attendance to one side. Old Mother Feng made haste to bring in some tea, and the woman brushed away a few drops of water from the rim of the cup before telling her daughter to offer it to him.

Hsi-men Ch'ing looked the young woman over from tip to toe.

Raven locks pile up beside her temples;
Powder and cosmetics adorn her cheeks.
Her carriage exhibits the rare beauty
of a secluded flower;
Her full flesh is a delicate jade that
exudes its own bouquet.[13]

He then ordered Tai-an to get the betrothal gifts, consisting of two embroidered handkerchiefs, four gold rings, and twenty taels of silver, out of his felt bag and directed Old Mother Feng to place them on the tea tray. Her mother lost no time in putting the rings on her daughter's hands, after which she bowed to him in thanks and returned to her room.

“In another couple of days,” Hsi-men Ch’ing said to the woman, “I’ll send someone to bring your daughter over to my place to be fitted for her trousseau. You can use this silver to make shoes and footbindings for her at home.”

The woman hastily kowtowed to him once more and thanked him, saying, “We all belong to Your Honor:

From the crowns of our heads to the soles of our feet, and we have put you to this additional trouble on behalf of our daughter. The two of us:

Though we should forfeit our lives could not repay you.[14]

We are obliged to Your Honor for everything and are especially grateful for your generous provision of betrothal gifts.”

“Is Manager Han not at home?” Hsi-men Ch’ing asked.

“This morning, after discussing matters with me, he went off to the shop,” the woman said. “Tomorrow I’ll have him go over to your place and kowtow to you.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing, observing that the woman was glib with her tongue, and that the words “Your Honor this, and Your Honor that” were seldom out of her mouth, felt himself irresistibly attracted to her.

As he was about to take his leave, he announced to her, “I’m on my way.”

“Stay a little longer,” the woman said.

“I can’t stay any longer,” replied Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Thereupon, he proceeded out the door, went straight home, and told Wu Yüeh-niang everything that had happened.

Yüeh-niang said, “It is a case of:

> A marriage affinity between people a thousand li apart
> connects them by a single thread.[15]

As long as this daughter of Manager Han’s is suitable, we will not have expended our efforts in vain.”

“Sometime soon,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “I’ll send someone to bring her over here to stay for a couple of days in order to be fitted for her trousseau, and, right now, I’ll begin by spending ten taels of

silver to have half a set of jewelry, hairpins, bracelets, and the like, made up for her."

"You'd better have them made up as quickly as possible," said Yüeh-niang. "If we can get her old man to escort her on this trip, we won't have to send anyone ourselves."

"We might as well resign ourselves to closing the shop for a few days," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and get Lai-pao to accompany him, so he can enquire at the residence whether or not the gifts for Commandant-Escort Ts'ai T'iao that we despatched by the adjutant the other day have actually arrived."

To make a long story short, two days later Hsi-men Ch'ing actually sent a page boy to fetch the daughter of the Han family. Her mother, Wang Liu-erh, had purchased an appropriate gift and personally accompanied her.

When they arrived, she kowtowed and was introduced to Yüeh-niang and the rest of the womenfolk of greater and lesser status, saying, "I'm imposing upon you."

"His Honor and the First Lady," she went on to say," as well as all the rest of you ladies, have condescended to show such favor to our daughter that, speaking for the two of us:

Our gratitude knows no bounds."

At first they were served tea in Yüeh-niang's room, after which they were entertained in the main room of the master suite. Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, and Li P'ing-erh all kept them company.

Hsi-men Ch'ing had purchased two bolts of red and green Lu-chou pongee and two bolts of poplin, with which to make lingerie for her, and had also called in Tailor Chao to make her two sets of brocaded satin clothing and a gown of figured scarlet satin.

Her mother, Wang Liu-erh, did her best to set her daughter at ease before going home that evening.

Hsi-men Ch'ing also bought a lacquer chest adorned with gold tracery for her trousseau, a dressing case, a mirror stand, boxes and jars, a brass and a pewter basin, a slop pail, a brazier grate, and so forth.

This was not the work of a day, but everything was finally taken care of. A letter was written and the tenth day of the ninth month was selected for her departure. Hsi-men Ch'ing obtained the services of four couriers from the district yamen and also deputed two orderlies, carrying dispatch cases and armed with bows and arrows, to accompany her. Lai Pao and Han Tao-kuo hired four horses for themselves and, following closely behind the wagons and the closed sedan chair, escorted her on her way to the Eastern Capital. But no more of this.

Wang Liu-erh, who was left at home without either her husband or her daughter for company, cried over it for two or three days.

One day Hsi-men Ch'ing, having nothing else to do, rode his horse over to look in on the house on Lion Street, where Old Mother Feng offered him some tea.

Hsi-men Ch'ing gave her a tael of silver, saying, "I'm much indebted to you in that matter of Manager Han's daughter the other day. You can buy something to wear with this tael of silver."

The old woman made haste to kowtow to him in gratitude.

"Have you been over to their place anytime in the last couple of days?" Hsi-men Ch'ing went on to ask.

"Not a day has gone by that I haven't gone over there to keep her company," said Old Mother Feng. "Ever since her daughter left she's really had no one to rely on at home. As a mother she had grown dependent on her. She cried over it for two or three days. It's only in the last couple of days that she's reconciled herself somewhat to the situation.

"She also said that she was much beholden to you in the matter of her daughter and asked me, 'Has His Honor given you anything in the way of a gratuity for your pains?' I replied, 'The gentleman is busy, and I haven't been over to his place the last several days. It is not my place to concern myself with how much or how little he may give me.' She also promised that when her husband returned I would be handsomely rewarded."

"When her old man returns," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "he's bound to have picked up a little something and could hardly fail to express

his gratitude to you.”

After they had talked for a while, seeing that:

There was nobody about,

he stealthily whispered into the old woman’s ear, thus and so, “Whenever you’re free, go over to her place and exercise your ingenuity in broaching the subject, but just say politely that I’d like to drop by and visit her for a while sometime when I’m free, and see how she reacts, whether she agrees or not. I’ll come back tomorrow to find out how she responds.”

The old woman covered her mouth with her hand and laughed sardonically, saying, “Sir, you’re just like:

An itinerant shoemaker tempted by an unmarried girl;
Wherever two hides meet you’ll cobble them together.[16]
Having dug up a silver doll with a thrust of the spade;
You are bent on acquiring its mother into the bargain.

Later this evening I’ll gradually make bold to broach the subject with her. You’re not acquainted with this woman, sir. She’s the younger sister of Butcher Wang, who slaughters cattle on our back street here. As the sixth sibling in her generation of the family, she’s called Wang Liu-erh, or Wang the Sixth. She was born in the year of the snake, so she’s twenty-eight years old. Although she dolls herself up in such a way as to make a spectacle of herself, it doesn’t follow that she is promiscuous. Be sure to come back tomorrow, sir, after I’ve had a chance to sound her out, and I’ll have something to report to you.”

“That’s it,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, and, having finished speaking, he mounted his horse and went home.

The old woman, after seeing Hsi-men Ch’ing on his way, prepared a meal for herself, ate it, locked the door of the house, and made her way slowly to Oxhide Lane where the woman lived.

The woman opened the door, ushered her into an inner room, and offered her a seat, saying, “Yesterday I prepared a batch of noodles for you, but you didn’t show up.”

“I certainly intended to come,” the old woman said, “but I went to someone else’s place and got so tangled up with one thing and

another that I was unable to get away."

"I've just prepared some steaming hot rice," said the woman, "and some stir-fried wheat gluten. Have something to eat."

"I've just finished eating," the old woman said, "but I'll sip some tea."

The woman then served her a cup of strong tea, and she looked on as her host ate her meal.

"You can see how forlorn I am," the woman said. "I've allowed myself to become so dependent on that heartless darling of mine that, ever since she left, the house seems completely deserted. I've got to do everything myself now, with the result that:

My nose is dingy,
My mouth is sooty,[17]

and I hardly look like a human being. It might even have been better if she had died and left me with a broken heart. This way, when she's so:

Far away from home,

how would you have me put her out of my mind? However urgently I long to see her, there's no way it can be done."

As she spoke her eyes felt sour and she began to cry.

"It hardly bears repeating," the old woman said, "but it was ever thus.

When a boy is born, everyone feels hot with excitement;
When a girl is born, everyone feels coldly indifferent.
Though she should live to be a hundred years old;
Sooner or later, she will belong to someone else.

However much you may complain about it today, in the future, when your daughter is installed in the mansion, she will start out on a firm footing. If she should bear so much as:

A single boy or half a girl,

the two of you will be in a position to enjoy yourselves and no longer have any reason to eomplain about me."

"When it comes to the doings in a prominent household," the woman said, "there are bound to be:

Layers within layers.

Who knows how things will turn out? By the time any child of hers amounts to anything, our jawbones may have long since been exposed to the elements somewhere."

"How can you say such a thing?" the old woman said. "Your daughter is as smart as they come. There's no need to worry about her as far as needlework and suchlike feminine accomplishments are concerned. Who is there that scruples to:

Depend upon his marriage connections
for his daily bread,

that you should be worried on her behalf?"

The two of them talked for some time, passing the same cup of wine back and forth between them, until the conversation gradually started to warm up, whereupon the old woman said, "I've got a silly proposition to make to you. Your husband is away from home, so that both the front and rear quarters of your house are completely deserted. In the evenings, when you're left all by yourself, aren't you afraid?"

"You're a fine one to talk when it's you who got me into this fix in the first place," the woman said. "You really ought to come over in the evenings to keep me company."

"Just in case I might not be able to make it sometime," the old woman said, "if I offered to stand as guarantor for someone else to come keep you company, would you be willing to agree to it?"

"And who might that be?" the woman asked.

The old woman covered her mouth with her hand and laughed, saying:

"One guest does not trouble two hosts.

His Honor from the mansion came over to the other house yesterday and said to me, thus and so, that since your daughter had left home, leaving you all by yourself, he'd like to drop by and visit you for a while sometime. What do you say? There isn't anyone else here. If you were to go along with him, you wouldn't have to worry about having enough to eat, to wear, to spend, or to use. Once such a liaison was established, in the future, he'd even be willing to look

for another house for you, which would be better than this out-of-the-way corner where you are now."

On hearing this the woman smiled and said, "With a houseful of goddess-like women at his disposal, what would he want with an ugly piece of goods like myself?"

"How can you say such a thing?" the old woman said. "It has always been true that:

In one's lover's eyes one appears like
a veritable Hsi-shih.[18]

It is clear that:

This meeting was fated to occur.

It's not as though His Honor has nothing else to do. If he weren't particularly interested in you, he would not have made a point of coming to my place yesterday, giving me a tael of silver, and saying that he was much indebted to me in that matter of your daughter the other day. Later on, when there was no one else present, he brought up the subject with me and told me to come here and broach it to you, saying that, if you were willing to consider it, he would be waiting for an answer from me.

In mortgaging land to make the deed,
The parties involved must be agreed.

Surely you don't mean to suggest that I would lie about it."

"If he deigns to visit me," said the woman, "invite him to come over tomorrow. I'll be waiting for him."

The old woman, seeing that she had indicated her assent, sat with her a while longer, after which, with:

A thousand thanks and ten thousand
expressions of gratitude,

she made her departure.

The next day, when Hsi-men Ch'ing arrived, she gave him a complete account, word for word, of what the woman had said. Hsi-men Ch'ing was:

Unable to contain his satisfaction,[19]

and promptly weighed out a tael of silver for Old Mother Feng so she could purchase wine and delicacies for the occasion.

The woman, on hearing that Hsi-men Ch'ing was coming, straightened up the interior of her house:

Lit incense and hung curtains,

and laid in a supply of:

Fine tea and fine water.

Before long, the old woman showed up with a basketful of chicken, fish, appetizers, groceries, and fruits, which she had purchased, and took them into the kitchen to be properly prepared. The woman took the trouble to:

Wash her hands and trim her nails,

before baking a small quantity of wheat cakes and wiping the tables and chairs until they shone.

Sometime after noon, Hsi-men Ch'ing donned a skullcap and informal clothes, put on his eyeshades, and headed straight for her door, accompanied by the two page boys, Tai-an and Ch'i-t'ung. Upon dismounting to go inside, he directed that the horse be taken back to the house on Lion Street and brought back for him that evening, while he kept only Tai-an to wait on him in the meantime. Hsi-men Ch'ing then proceeded into the parlor and sat down.

After some time, the woman, having dressed herself to befit the occasion, came out to greet him, saying, "I'm afraid we imposed on you the other day. You've gone to so much trouble on behalf of our daughter that:

Words do not suffice,

to express our gratitude."

"If there's anything I may have overlooked," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I hope the two of you will not hold it against me."

"With regard to our whole family," the woman said:

"Our obligations to you are so great,

we could never hold anything against you." After saying which, she kowtowed to him four times.

Old Mother Feng then brought in some tea, and the woman served it to him. Observing that the horse had been sent away and that Tai-an had closed the front door, the woman sat with Hsi-men Ch'ing for a while and then ushered him into an interior sitting room, at the other end of which a k'ang frame was set in an alcove behind a sliding paper door. The room was decorated with a set of four hanging scrolls, in frames carved with a motif of bees enjoying the fragrance of the flowers, depicting the story of Chang Chün-jui's meeting with Ts'ui Ying-ying[20] in the form of a collage of pieces of variegated silk and satin. The table was crowded with a dressing case, a mirror stand, boxes and jars, pewter utensils, and other objects, and a stick of incense was burning on the floor beneath it. In the place of honor there was a folding Tung-p'o armchair, in which Hsi-men Ch'ing took his seat. The woman then poured a cup of strong tea, flavored with walnuts and marinated bamboo shoots, and served it to him. When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished it, the woman took away the cup, sat down on the edge of the k'ang at the lower end of the room to keep him company, and asked him for a while about how things were going at home.

Hsi-men Ch'ing noticed that the woman handled the tray herself and said, "You really ought to have a girl to help out around here."

"The truth of the matter is," the woman said, "that ever since our daughter left home, things have been less convenient. In those days she was always here to help out, but now I've got to do everything myself."

"That's no problem," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Tomorrow, just get Old Mother Feng to find a twelve- or thirteen-year-old maidservant for you who can relieve you, at least to some extent, of the burden of housework."

"It will have to wait till my husband gets back," the woman said, "when we'll simply have to:

Scrape together something from the east or the west,

with which to get Old Mother Feng to find such a girl for us."

"There's no need for that," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Whatever it may cost, I'll pay her myself."

“How could it be appropriate to put you to such additional trouble and expense?” the woman said. “It’s not as though we haven’t imposed on Your Honor enough as it is.”

When Hsi-men Ch’ing saw that she had a way with words, his heart was filled with delight, and when Old Mother Feng came in to set up a table for them, he spoke to her about the matter of finding a maidservant.

“Since His Honor has already agreed to it,” Old Mother Feng said, “you ought to kowtow to him in thanks. Auntie Chao’s place in the southern quarter has a twelve-year-old girl available. I can bring her here for you to look over tomorrow. She’s a girl of humble social origin who was raised by her own family. Her father is a military patrolman whose horse was killed in a fall. Being unable to pay the cost of reparation, and fearful of the beating he would be subjected to by the commandant of the Regional Military Command, he has had to sell his daughter. The asking price for her is only four taels of silver. You might as well get His Honor to buy her for you.”

The woman hastened forward and bowed to him in gratitude. Before long the table was spread with saucers of food and the wine was ready to be poured. The woman filled a cup to the brim and proffered it to Hsi-men Ch’ing with both hands.

She was about to kowtow to him as well, but Hsi-men Ch’ing hastened to pull her up with one hand, saying, “You’ve already saluted me just a while ago. There’s no need for any further obeisance. A simple bow will do.”

The woman, with a broad smile on her face, made him a bow and then sat down to one side on a low stool. In the kitchen, Old Mother Feng prepared the appetizers, fruits, and other dishes and served them up one at a time. There were also a couple of chopsticks worth of thin pancakes, which the woman filled with shredded pork and vegetables selected with her own hand, rolled up into spring rolls, and offered to Hsi-men Ch’ing on a saucer. The two of them proceeded to:

Pass their winecups back and forth,

as they drank together in her room. Tai-an was also provided with a place to sit in the kitchen, where Old Mother Feng kept him company and gave him something to eat. But no more of this.

When they had shared a few rounds of drinks, the woman moved her seat closer to Hsi-men Ch'ing, so that she could talk to him and serve him more conveniently. After this, Hsi-men Ch'ing continued to drink with the woman, passing the same cup of wine back and forth between them. Seeing that no one came in, he embraced her by the neck, and they fell to kissing and sucking each other's tongues. The woman then stuck her hand out below and grasped Hsi-men Ch'ing's jade stalk. Mutually:

Carried away by lecherous desires, they called a halt to their drinking, closed the door to the room, and stripped off their clothes. The woman then proceeded to spread out her bedding on the k'ang frame in the alcove.

By this time the sun was already setting in the west. Hsi-men Ch'ing, exhilarated by the wine, took the silver clasp out of his wallet and fastened it in place, while the woman pumped his organ with her hand. She observed that:

> Its protuberances swelled and its head sprang up,
> It became empurpled and shiny,
> Tumid, and extremely thick.



Hsi-men Ch’ing Espouses Wang Liu-erh as a Mistress

On the one hand, she sat down in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s lap, while on the other hand, up above, the two of them fell to embracing each other by the neck and kissing. The woman then raised one of her legs, guided his organ into her vagina with her hand, and the two of

them poked away for a while. Hsi-men Ch'ing, fondling the soft smoothness of the woman's body and the fineness of her pubic hair, wanted to fully engage with her, so he ordered her to lie faceup on the end of the bed, and then, supporting himself on his two hands and wrapping her feet around the small of his back, devoted himself to retracting and thrusting. What did this bout of clouds and rain look like?

Behold:

An awe-inspiring aura obscures the halcyon couch,
A baleful breath immures the mandarin duck quilt.
On the coral pillow they display their prowess,
Behind kingfisher curtains they vie in audacity.
The male warrior is enraged;
Thrusting himself forward, he stabs away
with his black-tasseled spear.
The female commander is angry;
Spreading her hips, she makes a show of
her life-threatening sword.
One comes, the other goes;
As An Lu-shan consorts with
Yang Kuei-fei.[21]
One butts, the other lunges;
As Chang Chün-jui makes up to
Ts'ui Ying-ying.[22]
To left and right they join together;
In the Milky Way the Weaving Maid
meets the Herd Boy.[23]
Above and below they coil about;
In the fairy cave the immortal maiden
confronts Juan Chao.[24]
The spear comes, the bucklers bear the brunt;
Ts'ui Huai-pao unites himself with
Hsüeh Ch'iung-ch'iung.[25]
The ballista attacks, the blade fends it off;

Shuang Chien conjoins himself with
Su Hsiao-ch'ing.[26]
This one gives vent to the warbling of an oriole;
It much resembles Wu Tse-t'ien's rendezvous
with Hsüeh Ao-ts'ao.[27]
That one gives voice to the twittering of a swallow;
It is just like Shen I-chi's consorting
with Empress Lü.[28]
When they first engage;
The short spear stabs indiscriminately,
While the sharp blade responds in kind.
Subsequently to that;
Both ballistae fire simultaneously,
And the bucklers ward the missiles off.
The male warrior is excited;
Wielding his spear, he wants to penetrate
as far as the heart cavity;
The female commander is agitated;
Opening her orifice, she tries to swallow
her assailant, head and all.
The one who deploys the pair of ballistae,
Comes and goes, in his assault upon
the forces of the Inner Crotch;
The one who brandishes the pair of bucklers,
Above and below, defends herself against
the General Beneath the Navel.
One, adopting the position "The Golden Cock
Standing on a Single Foot,"[29]
Raises high her jade leg in order to
display her spirit.
The other, assuming the pose "The Bare Tree
Extending Its Roots,"[30]
"Inserts the arrow upside down"[31] in order to
penetrate the vagina.
The engagement is protracted,
His starry eyes grow dim,

The slightest move produces
a melting sensation.
The battle is prolonged,
Her slender waist writhes gently,
As the duel continues she worries
how long she can last.
The Matron of the Cave of Scanty Hair
backs across the bridge,
Releasing her waters to drown the invader.
The General of the Raven Black Armor[32]
waves his spear in vain,
Turning about in the endeavor to escape.
He of the navel aphrodisiac is unhorsed;
In an instant, he is trampled underfoot,
his flesh reduced to dust.
She that is warm and tight feigns confusion;
In a moment, she collapses into herself,
sinking down into the abyss.
He of the heavy armor, finds it to be
scattered hither and yon,
Just like falling flowers, driven about
by a drenching rain.[33]
She of the brocade noose, finds her
vigor gone, her muscles lax,[34]
Just like withered leaves, swirled around
by a violent wind.[35]
The Marshall of the Sulfur Ring,
His helmet awry and armor shattered,
has nowhere he can flee.
The General of the Silver Armor,
Sticks close to her own encampment,
loath to let him escape.

Truly:

The threatening clouds rise up as high as
the nine-layered heavens,

While down below the defeated combatants
lie tumbled on the field.[36]

It so happens that the woman suffered from a malady. Whenever she engaged in sexual intercourse she required her partner to pluck the flower in her rear courtyard, while she stimulated her clitoris below, before she was able to experience orgasm. If not, no matter what happened, she could not come. Even when Han Tao-kuo engaged in intercourse with her, he approached her by the rear entry more often than not, coming in by the front door no more than two or three times a month. A second malady of hers was that she was inveterately fond of sucking cock. She would keep it in her mouth for the longest time, even all night long, without being satisfied. No matter how much spunk her partner may have ejaculated, once subjected to her sucking and titillation, his member would re-erect itself forthwith. It was precisely these two maladies of hers that struck a responsive note in Hsi-men Ch'ing's heart.

That day he continued to engage with her until the first watch before going home.

"Come a little earlier tomorrow, sir," the woman said to Hsi-men Ch'ing, "while it is still daylight, so we can have time to take off all our clothes and really play together."

Hsi-men Ch'ing was greatly delighted. The next day he went to the silk goods shop on Lion Street, where he weighed out four taels of silver and gave them to Old Mother Feng so she could purchase the maidservant for Wang Liu-erh's use, whose name was changed to Chin-erh.

Obsessed with the sweet prospect before him, on the second day, Hsi-men Ch'ing again rode his horse to the woman's home to pay her a visit. Originally both Ch'i-t'ung and Tai-an accompanied him, but when they got to her door, he told Ch'i-t'ung to take the horse back to the house on Lion Street.

Old Mother Feng devoted herself to going out with the jug to buy wine, picking up things on the street to prepare for them, running errands on their behalf, and so forth, and was dependent for her living on what she could make out of these transactions. Every time

Hsi-men Ch'ing paid her a visit, he gave the woman one or two taels of silver for her expenses. He would come while it was still daylight and remain right up until the first watch before going home.

The members of his household were kept as completely in the dark as if they had been:

Locked tight in an iron bucket.

Since Old Mother Feng was working so hard at the woman's place every day, she seldom showed up at Hsi-men Ch'ing's residence. Li P'ing-erh sent page boys to summon her two or three times, but she claimed she' was unable to get away. Whenever she felt like it, she would lock the door and stay away for a whole day at a time.

One day the page boy, Hua-t'ung, ran into the old woman and brought her home with him.

"Old Mother," Li P'ing-erh complained to her, "I haven't seen so much as your shadow for days on end. What kind of:

Pussyfooting errands,

have you been up to? Every time I send after you, you're not there. You seem to have completely given up stopping by here. Are you really as busy as all that? I'm left with this accumulation of clothes, waistbands, and the baby's bedding that I've been waiting for you to come and help the maidservants launder for me, but you never show up."

"My dear mistress," the old woman exclaimed, "that's a fine thing to say!

If you insist on sending a scribe to arrest a deserter,
He can do no more than cite a body of precedents.
If you endeavor to turn a salt peddler into a sculptor,
He'll only end up making an 'idol' use of his time."[37]

"Old Mother," said Li P'ing-erh, "you're as bad as:

The abbot of the Stone Buddha Monastery:
Every time you're asked to officiate, you're too busy.

I'm sure you're out making money for yourself all day long, it's just that I don't know where you are."

"As for me," the old woman expostulated:

“The tempest having blown away the rest of my face,
My mouth can hardly be expected to keep up.
What money have I been making that you should have reason to be angry with me? You can be sure that I’ve had it anxiously in mind to drop by, but I just haven’t been able to make it. I hardly know myself what it is that’s been keeping me so busy all day. Some time ago the First Lady in the rear compound gave me the silver and asked me to pick up a rush prayer mat for her Buddhist devotions outside the South Gate, but I forgot all about it. Yesterday, when I finally remembered her request, the lousy southern slave of a mat seller was nowhere to be found. What will I say to her?”

“Do you mean to say that you still don’t have that prayer mat for her?” exclaimed Li P’ing-erh. You might as well have been:

Free as you please,
and run off somewhere with a bonze. She’s already given you the silver for it, and after all this time you still haven’t bought it for her. How can you go on:

Playing the fool and putting on airs, that way?”

“It has had to wait,” the old woman said, “until I’ve had a chance to explain the situation to the First Lady, but when I do, I’ll return this silver to her. Yesterday, when I was riding a mule, I almost lost it.”

“If you had lost that money of hers,” said Li P’ing-erh, “you’d be a dead duck.”

The old woman then headed straight for the rear compound, but before going into Yüeh-niang’s room she went into the kitchen to reconnoiter, where she found Yü-hsiao sitting together with Lai-hsing’s wife, Hui-hsiu.

Upon seeing her, Yü-hsiao said, “So you’ve finally showed up, Old Feng. Where have you come from, exalted person that you are? Your Sixth Lady is ready to eat your flesh alive. She claims that you haven’t been showing her so much as a glimpse of your shadow.”

The old woman went up to them, bowed twice, and said, “I’ve just been in her place up front where she nagged away at me for some time.”

“What about the rush prayer mat that Mother asked you to pick up for her?” asked Yü-hsiao.

“I went outside the South Gate yesterday with silver in hand,” said the old woman, “but the vendor who sells rush prayer mats has sold out his stock and gone back where he came from. He won’t return until the third month of next year. I’ve still got the silver right here. Sister, let me turn it over to you.”

“You crazy crone!” laughed Yü-hsiao. “Father is still in the room weighing out silver. After he comes out, you can return it to her personally.”

“Sit down for a while,” she then went on to say. “I’ve got something to ask you. How long has it been since Manager Han set out to escort his daughter to the capital? He ought to be back any time now, and when he returns it ought to be a piece of good luck for you. He’s bound to express his gratitude to you in some way.”

“Whether he thanks me or not is up to him,” the old woman said. “As of today, he’s only been gone eight days. He won’t be back before the end of the month.”

Before long, Hsi-men Ch’ing finished weighing out the silver, turned it over to Pen the Fourth to take out to the country estate, and then went out himself.

The old woman went into the master suite to see Yüeh-niang but still hesitated to produce the silver, simply saying, “That southerner had only a few coarse prayer mats available and went home after selling them off. He’ll come back next year with good rush prayer mats of higher quality.”

Yüeh-niang, who was a straightforward person, said, “Well that’s that. You might as well hold onto the silver, and next year I’ll ask you to pick up two of them for me, that’s all.”

She gave the old woman some tea cakes to eat, after which she returned to Li P’ing-erh’s quarters.

“Did the First Lady give you a hard time?” Li P’ing-erh asked.

“I was able to paper things over in such a way as to satisfy her,” the old woman said. “She actually gave me some tea to drink and rewarded me with a couple of large cakes when I took my leave.”

“Those must have been the cakes left over from her visit to the Ch’iaos’ house yesterday to celebrate the full-month ceremony for the birth of their daughter,” said Li P’ing-erh. “Old Mother, that mouth of yours, true to form, is as lethal as:

The mosquitoes in the sixth month:
They bite you to death.”

“As long as you’re here today,” she went on to say, “you might as well take care of the laundry before going home.”

“Get your things together and procure some starch,” the old woman replied. “I’ll come by first thing tomorrow morning. This afternoon I still have to go to the home of an old client of mine to conduct some business.”

“You old baggage!” exclaimed Li P’ing-erh. “You’re never content unless you can:

Fool with the branches and tug at the leaves.

If you don’t show up tomorrow, I’ll have something to say to you.”

The old woman talked and laughed for a while before taking her leave.

Li P’ing-erh urged her to stay, saying, “Don’t leave until you’ve had something to eat.”

“I’m still full,” the old woman replied. “I don’t need to eat anything.”

Whereupon, fearing that Hsi-men Ch’ing might have preceded her in paying a visit to Wang Liu-erh’s place, she hastened on her way:

Covering two steps with every one.

Truly:

The matchmaker is like a secondary ghost
that haunts the locality;
Going back and forth, one party to the other,
wiping the oil from her lips.
In a single day she manages to go a thousand
times a thousand steps;
But merely succeeds in engendering hardship
for her pair of legs.

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 38

HSI-MEN CH'ING SUBJECTS TRICKSTER HAN TO THE THIRD DEGREE; P'AN CHIN-LIEN ON A SNOWY EVENING TOYS WITH HER *P'I-P'A*

Though her lovely person is warm and soft,
she is a practiced old hand;
Like a jade flagon illuminated by moonlight,
she is made to inspire passion.
Lightly turning her jadelike countenance,
the flowers look seductive;
At the slightest perturbation of her delicate brows,
her cloudy chignon falls loose.
Attractive enough to drive bees to distraction,
the peach blossom's pistil is open;
Sufficiently alluring to drive butterflies to madness,
her willowy waist is pristine.
The heart of the beholder is held in thrall,
subject to lasting infatuation;
May she not take after the "willows" in the quarter,
who respond with pallid affection.[1]

THE STORY GOES that when Old Mother Feng had proceeded as far as the postern gate leading to the front reception hall, she saw Tai-an standing in attendance outside the latticework doors to the hall with tea tray in hand.

Tai-an made a meaningful moue in her direction, saying, “You go on over there. Father and Master Ying the Second are talking together. As soon as they’re done, and he’s seen him off, he’ll start out himself. He’s already sent Ch’i-t’ung ahead to deliver the wine.”

As soon as the old woman heard these words, she hastened on her way:

Covering two steps with every one.

It so happens that Ying Po-chüeh had come to speak to Hsi-men Ch’ing about the merchant contractors Li Chih and Huang the Fourth, who had undertaken the assignment to procure one-third of the annual quota of thirty thousand taels worth of incense, wax, and other materials for use by the imperial household. Their share, therefore, in addition to whatever interest they could make on the transaction, would amount to ten thousand taels of silver, which would be paid over to them in bullion upon delivery of the consignment to Tung-p’ing prefecture.

“I’ve come to consult with you,” he said, “about whether or not you would care to take a hand in the transaction.”

“Why should I want to become a purveyor?” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. They:

Substitute the counterfeit for the genuine,
Bribe officials and promise them kickbacks.

When such cases come before my yamen, we are required to proceed against them. Why should I involve myself in such a business?”

“If you don’t participate,” said Ying Po-chüeh, “they’ll just go to someone else. All you have to do is lend them two thousand taels of silver, on which they will pay you five percent interest per month, and when they receive payment for their consignment they will return your original investment. What do you think? If you agree to the undertaking, I’ll speak to them and have them bring the contract to you tomorrow.”

“Only out of consideration for you,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “I’ll put up a thousand taels of silver for them. Right now, because of the construction work on my country estate, I’m short of cash.”

When Ying Po-chüeh saw that Hsi-men Ch'ing had indicated his assent, he said, "Brother, if you're so strapped for cash, couldn't you, somehow or other, come up with another five hundred taels worth of merchandise in order to make up an even one thousand five hundred for them? They wouldn't dare let you down."

"If they let me down," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I'll know how to handle them. But there's another thing, Brother Ying the Second. If I put up any money for them, they mustn't run around on the outside flaunting my name in order to:

Fleece people to the east and cheat them on the west.

If I get wind of anything like that, I fear there'll be more than enough room to accommodate them in the lockup at my yamen."

"Brother," said Ying Po-chüeh, "how can you say such a thing?

The supervisor cannot relinquish his responsibility.

If they run around on the outside flaunting your name and no harm is done, so much for that. But if they should do any damage, what am I good for? You can simply relax on that score. If anything goes amiss, I'll be the first to tell you about it. If you agree, I'll let them know so they can be prepared to draft the contract tomorrow."

"Don't have them come tomorrow," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I've got something to do. Have them come the day after tomorrow."

When they had finished speaking, Ying Po-chüeh took his leave.

Hsi-men Ch'ing ordered Tai-an to prepare his horse, put on his eye shades, and asked, "Has Ch'i-t'ung already left?"

"He's still here," said Tai-an. "He's gone to fetch your riding crop."

Before long, the riding crop was fetched, and Hsi-men Ch'ing mounted his horse and set off for Oxhide Lane.

Who could have anticipated that Han Tao-kuo's younger brother, Han the Second, or Trickster Han, who had lost at gambling and managed to get stark staring drunk, should turn up at his elder brother's house looking for something more to drink.

Pulling a string of small sausages out of his sleeve, he said, "Sister-in-law, since my elder brother hasn't returned yet, why don't

the two of us share a jug of distilled spirits."

The woman, who was afraid that Hsi-men Ch'ing might show up and was aware that Old Mother Feng was in the kitchen, did not take him up on it, saying, "I don't want anything, but if you insist on a drink, take it out of the way somewhere and indulge yourself. I'm sick and tired of the way you:

Devote yourself to stirring up trouble,

when your elder brother is away from home. What are you coming around again for, anyway?"

Trickster Han, opening wide his bleary eyes, refused to leave. Catching sight of a jug of wine underneath the table, with a white clay stopper and a red paper label attached to it, he asked, "Sister-in-law, who's wine is that? Open it up and decant a flagon's worth for us to drink. Ai-ya, you're keeping it all for yourself."

"Don't you dare touch it," the woman exclaimed. "It's a gift from His Honor in the mansion. Your elder brother hasn't even seen it yet. There'll be time enough to pour out a cup for you after he gets home."

"Why should I wait for any elder brother?" said Han the Second. "Even if it belonged to the emperor himself, I'd help myself to a cup."

He was just about to pull out the clay stopper when the woman gave him a precipitate shove with her hand, snatched up the wine jug, and lugged it into her bedroom.

It took a while for Trickster Han, who had been knocked flat on his back, to regain his feet.

His discomfiture turning into anger,[2]

he muttered abusively, "You lousy whore! I brought these sausages over with the best of intentions, thinking that you must be lonely all by yourself and would be happy to share a cup of wine with me. You've not only ignored my suggestion, but knocked me down into the bargain. Don't you worry. You may have found yourself another lover with plenty of money and decided to ignore me. You may want to break up with me, so you're deliberately giving me a hard time, disregarding me, mocking me, and driving me away. You'd

just better not let me catch the two of you together, you worthless whore, or it'll be a case of:

A white blade going in, and

A red blade coming out."

No sooner did the woman hear these indiscreet words than:

A spot of red appeared beside each ear, and

In an instant her two cheeks were purple.

Picking up a laundry bat in her hand, she drove him out of the house, cursing as she went, "You lousy starveling of a gallows bird! You've had it! You think you can guzzle yourself drunk somewhere and then turn up at my place and freeload, do you? Well I'm not going to let you get away with it."

Muttering imprecations as he went, Trickster Han cursed her for a whore all the way out the door.

Who could have anticipated that Hsi-men Ch'ing would come riding along just at this juncture and, catching sight of him, demand to know who it was.

"You know perfectly well who it is," the woman replied. "It's that bastard Han the Second. Seeing that his elder brother is away from home, he's in the habit of losing at gambling and then coming around here in his cups to make trouble for me. When his elder brother is at home, he gives him a beating when he runs into him."

Trickster Han, observing the lay of the land, disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"That dead duck of a beggar!" Hsi-men Ch'ing exclaimed. "Tomorrow, when I get to the yamen, I'll give him something to remember me by."

"I've just provided you with another source of irritation," the woman said.

"You don't understand," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "We can't let him get away with that sort of thing."

"What you say is right," the woman responded. "It has always been true that:

Goodness is taken advantage of by others,

Benevolence merely gives rise to disaster.”[3]

As she spoke, she ushered Hsi-men Ch’ing into the parlor and offered him a seat.

Hsi-men Ch’ing ordered Ch’i-t’ung to return home with the horse and said to Tai-an, “You keep watch at the front door. If that ‘bare stick’ so much as flaunts his shadow around here, lock him up, and bring him to the yamen tomorrow.”

“When he heard that you had arrived,” said Tai-an:

“Who knows where his soul ended up going to.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing took a seat. The woman, after making him an obeisance, promptly directed her maidservant Chin-erh to bring out a cup of tea, flavored with fruit kernels, from the inner room and serve it to Hsi-men Ch’ing, after which she told her to kowtow to him.



Wang Liu-erh Menaces Trickster Han with a Laundry Bat

“That will do,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “She looks like a nice enough girl. You might as well make what use of her you can.”

“Old Mother Feng is here, isn’t she,” he went on to say. “Why don’t you have her take care of the tea?”

“As for that old body, Mother Feng,” the woman said, “I’ve asked her to busy herself in the kitchen.”

“That wine that I had the page boy deliver a while ago,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “is ‘Bamboo Leaf Green’[4] that was given to me by a

eunuch. It contains a lot of medicinal ingredients and has a very bracing taste. I noticed the other day that the wine you obtained around here was not fit to drink. That's why I had this jug of wine brought over for you."

The woman made him another bow, saying, "Thank you very much for the wine. It's just as you say. We're so out of the way, living in this obscure alley, that we don't even have access to a decent wine shop. Where would we get high-quality wine without going all the way to Main Street?"

"When Manager Han gets home," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "you ought to talk it over with him. I'd be willing to spend a few taels of silver to buy a house on Lion Street so the two of you could simply move over there to live. It would be nearer the silk goods store, on the one hand, as well as being more convenient for shopping and everything else."

"What you say is right," the woman said. "If you could see fit, somehow or other, to show us such favor, so that we could manage to get away from this place, it would be wonderful. Even with regard to your coming and going, it would have the advantage of obviating a good deal of gossip on the part of petty-minded people. As long as what we do is right, there's no reason to be afraid of anybody. If this is something you've made up your mind to do, go ahead and do it. It's all the same whether he's at home or not. After all, there's no other road for him to take."

After they had talked for a while, a table was set up in the inner room, and she invited Hsi-men Ch'ing inside to loosen his clothes, sit down, and relax. Before long, wine and food were prepared, and the table was spread with chicken, duck, fish, pork, as well as appetizers and snacks of all kinds. The woman kept him company and poured the wine.

It was not long before the two of them sat down together:

Shoulder to shoulder and thigh over thigh,

and proceeded to drink in earnest. When they began to feel the effects of the wine, they took off their clothes:

Got into bed and engaged each other in amorous sport,

Enjoying each other to their heart's content.

The woman had long since laid out a thick layer of bedding on the k'ang frame and fumigated it until it exuded a pungent fragrance.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was aware that the woman was fond of the game of breeze and moonlight and was anxious to see what he could do to arouse her. Before leaving home, he had secreted a brocaded bag in his sleeve, which he now opened to reveal a silver clasp, a "ladies' delight," a sulfur-imbrued ring, a medicated band of white satin, a "pendent jade ring," a navel aphrodisiac plaster, and a "titillating bell," a full complement of sexual implements. The woman:

Lay down faceup on the pillow,
Raised her jade legs on high, while
Her "chicken-tongue" protruded from within.

Hsi-men Ch'ing first had the woman insert the "titillating bell" in her vagina, after which he fastened the silver clasp to the root of his organ, fitted the sulfur-imbrued ring around the neck of his glans, and stuck the navel aphrodisiac plaster on his navel. The woman guided his organ into her vagina with her hand until:

The two of them were joined together, and
It gradually penetrated more than halfway.

"Daddy!" the woman exclaimed, "I'm afraid your legs will start to hurt if you squat that way. Pull the pillow over so you can sit on it, and let this whore of yours do the moving."

"I'm afraid you're not really comfortable," she went on to say. "Why don't you try fucking me with one of my legs suspended? How would that be?"

Hsi-men Ch'ing actually unwrapped one of her foot bindings and tied it around her foot in such a way that one leg was suspended from the latticework partition of the bed. Thereupon he lowered his head and proceeded to thrust and retract until her vaginal fluids began to flow uninterruptedly, like a snail secreting its slime.[5] In the process of retracting, a good deal of white discharge emerged.

"Why are you producing this white discharge?" Hsi-men Ch'ing asked.

He was about to wipe himself off when the woman said, “Don’t wipe it off. Let me suck it for you.”

Thereupon, she squatted down in front of him and lapped it up so thoroughly that:

The sound of her sucking was audible.

This so affected Hsi-men Ch’ing that his:

Lecherous desires were suddenly aroused.

Turning her over, he set out, with her cooperation, to pluck the flower in her rear courtyard. His turtle head was encumbered with the sulfur-imbrued ring so that, even with moistening and reaming, it was difficult to proceed. The woman knit her brows and silently endured the pain for some time before he succeeded in immersing the knob of his glans. Hsi-men Ch’ing thereupon began to thrust and retract in earnest, while the woman rubbed his organ with her hand until:

It gradually penetrated more than halfway.

Parking her posterior in Hsi-men Ch’ing’s lap, and:

Turning her head around with an amorous glance,

she said, in a quavery voice, “Daddy! Slow down a bit. The rest of it is even thicker and larger. How will this whore of yours ever endure it?”

Hsi-men Ch’ing lifted her haunches in order to:

Observe the sight as he went in and out.[6]

Then, addressing her by her informal name, he said, “Wang Liu-erh, my child, your daddy doesn’t know why it is, but this is the one thing that delights him the most. Who would have thought that today I should meet up with you. You’re truly a woman after my own heart. In the days to come you and I will be:

Inseparable in life or death.”

“Daddy!” the woman replied. “I only fear that in the future you will grow tired of playing with me and pay me no heed. What then?”

“Once we become acquainted,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “you’ll see that I’m not that sort of person.”

As they talked together, the two of them had been going at it for about the time it would take to eat a meal. Hsi-men Ch'ing told the woman that she would have to utter promiscuously whatever:

Obscene sounds and wanton words,

occurred to her before he would come. The woman, from underneath, raised her hips with her hands, the better to receive his semen.

When pleasure reaches its height passions are intense,

and Hsi-men Ch'ing:

Ejaculated like a geyser.[7]

When they were finished, he retracted his organ which still carried the sulfur-imbrued ring, and the woman sucked it clean for him before the two of them lay down to sleep:

Head to head and thigh over thigh.[8]

Truly:

The predilection appealing equally to his taste,
He chooses to pluck the flower in the rear courtyard.

There is a song that testifies to this:

My handsome lover,
Particularly loves to pluck the flower in the rear courtyard.
Ordinarily he comes in by the front door,
But it is already occupied by the Brazenfaced Vanguard.[9]
When he presses his way into the portal, it is hard to bear,
But he pulls up on the reins,
Wheels his steed about, and
Returns triumphant to the fray;
Infusing my body with a melting sensation.
My powdered face is utterly abased;
My powdered face, suffused with the glow of sunset clouds.

Hsi-men Ch'ing and the woman embraced each other until the second watch. It was only when the page boy arrived to fetch him with the horse that he got up and returned home.

The next morning, as soon as he got to the yamen, he sent two bailiffs to arrest Trickster Han and hale him before the office of the Provincial Surveillance Commission, where he was arraigned for petty larceny in the neighborhood. Thereupon:

Without permitting any further explanation,

he was subjected to the ankle-squeezers and given twenty strokes of the bamboo, so severely that:

Fresh blood flowed down his legs.

As a result, he was confined to his bed for a month and very nearly forfeited his life. After that, he was so intimidated that he dared not molest the woman with so much as his shadow. Truly:

He whose hatred is petty is no gentleman;
He who lacks ruthlessness is not a hero.

A few days later, Lai-pao, Han Tao-kuo, and their retinue arrived back from the Eastern Capital.

Lai-pao gave a complete report on their mission to Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "Majordomo Chai Ch'ien, on seeing the girl, was very much delighted and said to thank you for your trouble. He put us up in the grand preceptor's mansion for two days, while we awaited his answer. He has sent you a black horse as a gift. He sealed up a present of fifty taels of silver for Manager Han, by way of the bride-price for his daughter, and also gave me a gift of twenty taels for my traveling expenses."

"That was only appropriate," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

When he read the letter he had received in reply, it was no more than an expression of the idea that:

His gratitude knew no bounds.

From this time on, the two households exchanged visiting cards employing the terminology appropriate for married relations and addressed each other as kinsmen. But no more of this.

When Han Tao-kuo had kowtowed in gratitude and was about to go home, Hsi-men Ch'ing said to him, "Manager Han, you must keep this bride-price for your daughter as a fitting reward for the kindness the two of you displayed in raising her."

Han Tao-kuo repeatedly refused to accept it, saying, “Thanks to your gracious magnanimity, we have already received compensation some time ago. How could it be right for me to accept this silver in addition? We’ve already imposed upon you more than enough as it is.”

“If you don’t agree,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “I’ll be annoyed. Take it home with you, but don’t spend it. I’ve got something in mind for it.”

Han Tao-kuo then kowtowed in gratitude, took his leave, and went home. When his wife saw that her husband had come back, she was utterly delighted. On the one hand, she took his luggage and brushed the dust off his clothes, while, on the other, she asked how things had gone, and whether their daughter had been well received when they arrived at their destination.

Han Tao-kuo told her about the events of the trip, both going and coming, saying, “It’s a very decent establishment. When our daughter arrived there, she was provided with a suite of three rooms for herself, with two maidservants to wait on her, as well as clothing and hair ornaments, it goes without saying. The next day, she was taken to meet the lady of the house. Majordomo Chai was extremely pleased with her. He put us up for two days and regaled us with more wine and food than we or the servants could eat. He also provided a gift of fifty taels of silver, by way of a bride-price, which I repeatedly refused to keep for myself, but His Honor wouldn’t take it and insisted that I bring it home with me.”

Thereupon he proceeded to turn the silver over to the woman, who put it away. Only then did the woman feel as though:

The stone on her head had finally fallen to the ground.

“Tomorrow,” she said, turning to Han Tao-kuo, “we ought to provide a tael of silver as an expression of thanks to Old Mother Feng. While you were away, I have been much indebted to her for constantly coming to keep me company. His Honor has also seen fit to reward her with a tael.”

While they were speaking, whom should he see but a maidservant who came in to serve them with tea.

“Where did this young lady come from?” asked Han Tao-kuo.

“This is a maidservant that we have just purchased,” the woman replied. “Her name is Chin-erh. Come over here and kowtow to your father.”

After she had performed her kowtow, the maidservant went off to the kitchen.

His wife then proceeded, thus and so, to relate the whole story of her affair with Hsi-men Ch’ing.

“After you went away, he dropped by here three or four times before coming up with the four taels of silver with which I was able to purchase this maidservant. Every time he comes by, he’s good for a tael or two of silver. Han the Second, who really:

Doesn’t know his place,[10]

got angry about it and came over here looking for trouble, but he happened to run into him and ended up being dragged off to the yamen, where he was beaten to a stinking pulp. Up until now, he hasn’t dared show his face around here any more. His Honor, seeing how inconvenient our present location is, has promised to buy a house for us on a main street, and have us move in there to live.”

“No wonder he refused to accept this silver just now,” said Han Tao-kuo. “He told me to take it home with me, but not to spend it. So this is what it turns out to be about.”

“Now that we’ve already got this fifty taels of silver in hand,” the woman said, “in the future he’s sure to add a few taels in addition and find a decent house for us. It’s all owing to my willingness to surrender my body to him. We might as well take advantage of the opportunity to get what we can out of him and improve our life-style.”

“After I’ve gone to the shop tomorrow,” Han Tao-kuo said, “if he should show up, pretend that I don’t know anything about it. Don’t be remiss in your treatment of him, but cater to his every whim. It’s not all that easy to make money these days. How did you ever happen on this way of doing it?”

“You lousy ruffian!” his wife laughed. “You’ll drop dead in your tracks someday. You’re certainly proficient enough at:

Eating the bread of idleness.[11]

You don't have any idea what your old lady has had to put up with."

The two of them laughed about it a while longer, after which she fed him his supper, and husband and wife prepared themselves to rest.

The next morning, Han Tao-kuo stopped by the mansion to fetch the keys and then proceeded on his way to open the shop, where he gave Old Mother Feng a tael of silver to reward her for her pains, but there is no need to describe this in detail.

One day, when Hsi-men Ch'ing and Judicial Commissioner Hsia Yen-ling were returning from the yamen, the judicial commissioner noticed that Hsi-men Ch'ing was riding a tall dappled black horse and asked him, "My colleague, how does it happen that you're no longer riding that white horse of yours but have exchanged it for this one? It certainly seems to be a fine steed, but what does it look like in the mouth?"

"I'm letting that horse rest at home for a couple of days," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "This horse was sent to me as a gift the other day by my kinsman Chai Ch'ien in the Eastern Capital. It had been presented to him by Assistant Regional Commander Liu of the Hsi-hsia[12] army. It only has four teeth as yet in its mouth. It has a good gait, either fast or slow, its only faults being that it insists on hogging the manger and is prone to kick. When it first arrived, it had lost a good deal of weight from the rigors of the road, but in the last couple of days it is looking better on a regular diet."

"This horse of yours steps along pretty well," said Hsia Yen-ling. "You might as well ride it regularly as you traverse the streets every day, but don't try to take it too far. I would guess that hereabouts it must be worth at least seventy or eighty taels of silver. That horse that I customarily ride was lamed yesterday, so in order to come to the yamen this morning I had to send a note to borrow this horse from a relative of mine. It's been most inconvenient."

"That's no problem," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "If you don't have a horse at the moment, I've got a sorrel at home that I could let you

have.”

Judicial Commissioner Hsia raised his hand in acknowledgment and said, “If my colleague will deign to help me out, I will pay you whatever it is worth.”

“There’s no need to haggle over it,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “As soon as I get home, I’ll send someone over with it.”

When the two of them reached the western end of Lion Street, Hsi-men Ch’ing raised his hand in farewell and made his way home. As soon as he arrived there, he sent Tai-an to deliver the horse as he had promised.

When Judicial Commissioner Hsia saw it, he was delighted, rewarded Tai-an with a tael of silver, and gave him a note in reply, saying, “Thank you very much. I’ll express my gratitude in person when I arrive at the yamen tomorrow.”

After two days had gone by, it being the middle decade of the tenth month, Judicial Commissioner Hsia, having prepared some homemade chrysanthemum wine[13] and engaged the services of two boy actors, invited Hsi-men Ch’ing over for a chat, as a means of expressing his gratitude for the gift of the horse. Hsi-men Ch’ing, after eating his noonday meal at home and taking care of some business, set out for Hsia Yen-ling’s house to attend the party.

It so happens that the judicial commissioner had provided an elaborate feast for the delectation of Hsi-men Ch’ing alone. When he saw that he had arrived, he was:

Unable to contain his delight,[14]

hastened down the steps to welcome him, and ushered him into the reception hall, where they exchanged salutations.

“My colleague,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “what need was there for you to go to so much trouble?”

“This year I’ve had some chrysanthemum wine made in my humble abode,” said Hsia Yen-ling. “Being at leisure, I thought I’d see if you would condescend to come by for a chat. I haven’t presumed to invite any other guests.”

Thereupon, having exchanged the customary amenities, they discarded their formal clothes and sat down in the positions

appropriate for guest and host. After tea had been served, they played a board game together and then took their places at the table, where they proceeded to drink wine and chat, while the two boy actors entertained them, playing their instruments and singing by their side. Truly, it is a case of:

Wine is presented in golden goblets,
brimming with fragrant foam;
Ivory clappers accompany the psaltery,
as they sing "Partridge Sky."

We will say no more about Hsi-men Ch'ing's participation in the drinking party at Hsia Yen-ling's home.

Let us return to the story of P'an Chin-lien. When she observed what a long time it had been since Hsi-men Ch'ing had paid a visit to her quarters, every day:

Her halcyon hued coverlet felt cold;[15]
Her hibiscus bed curtains were chill.[16]

That night she left the postern gate ajar, while inside her bedroom:

She brightly lit the silver lamp,
Leaned against the standing screen,
And idly strummed her *p'i-p'a*.

She kept up her vigil until the second or third watch and sent Ch'un-mei out to look several times, but there was nothing to be seen. Truly:

She who is wont to diligently strum her *p'i-p'a*
late into the night;
When all alone in her deserted chamber can scarcely
bear to play it.[17]

Picking up her *p'i-p'a* and laying it across her lap she gently played a song to the tune "River Water, with Two Variations" in order to dispel her languor. Unable to fall asleep on the bed with her clothes on, what was she to do?

Languidly I lean against the standing screen,
Or force myself to lie down in my clothes.

Suddenly she heard the wind chimes on the eaves of her room:

Make a peal of sound.

Thinking it was Hsi-men Ch'ing who had come and was making the racket with the door knocker, she hastily sent Ch'un-mei out to take a look. But she reported, "Mother, you're mistaken. The wind has come up outside and it's started to snow." The woman then continued to accompany herself as she sang:

I hear the roaring of the wind,
I see the snow blowing against the casement.
Let the frozen flakes flutter!

Before long:

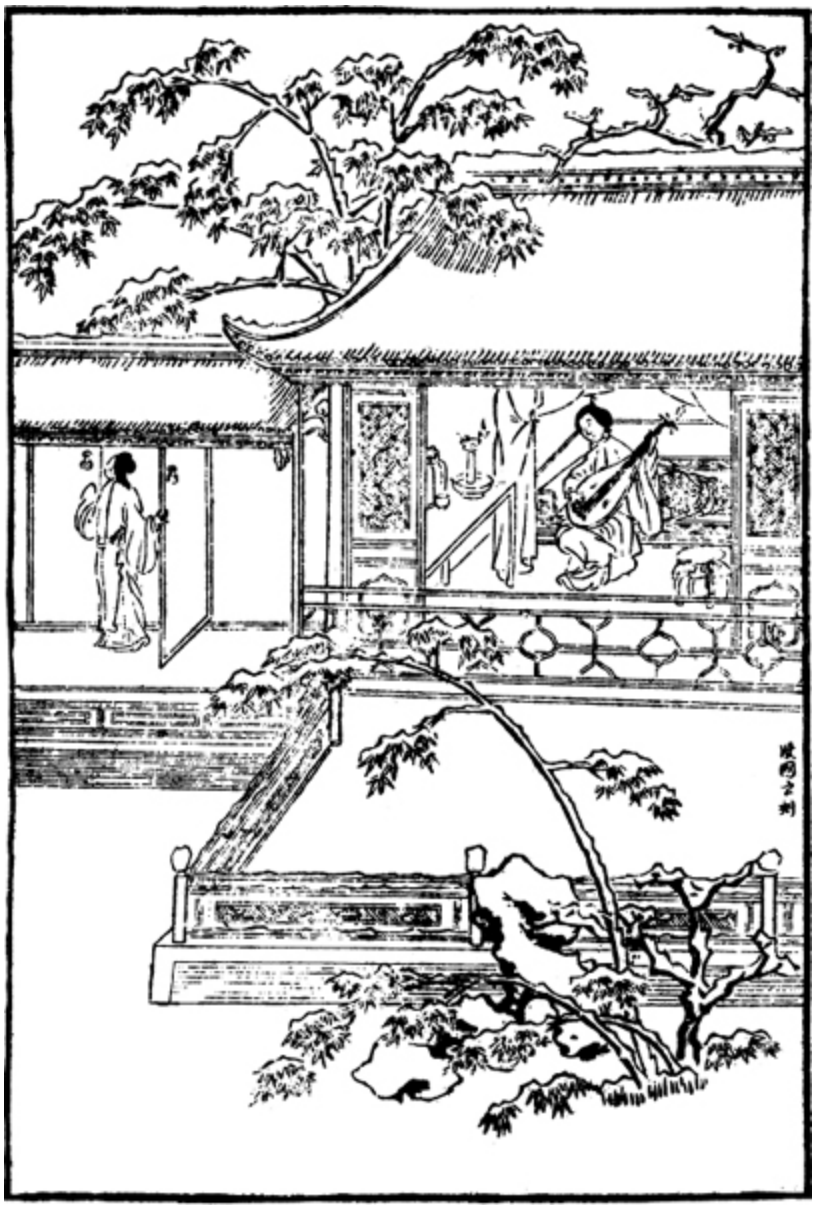
The lamp grew dim and the incense burnt out.[18]

She thought to herself that she ought to trim the wick and relight the incense, but, seeing that Hsi-men Ch'ing hadn't come, she felt no inclination to move. She sang:

Too lazy to trim the precious lamp,
Too listless to relight the incense burner;

Truly:

Each day was like three months of autumn;
Each night seemed like half a summer.



P’an Chin-lien on a Snowy Evening Toys with Her *P’i-p’a*

Even if I last through this night,
I’ll only be afraid of the morrow.
The more I think about it, the more I wonder,
when will this botheration ever end?

“You fickle scoundrel!” she thought to herself. “When I think of all the things you said to me at the start, how can I help feeling hurt?”

Coda:

Whenever I think of it, and especially tonight,
it really burns me up!
You've ruined the springtime
of my youth.

"Who would have thought you'd land me in such a fix, with no place to go?" she cursed[19] at him.

From the way you've walked out on me, it's clear:
You may have what it takes to get started,
but you won't carry through![20]

To resume our story, around the time of the first watch, Hsi-men Ch'ing left the drinking party at Hsia Yen-ling's and set out for home. The sky was overcast the whole way and the precipitation, which was half rain and half snow, melted as soon as it landed on his clothes. All he could do was whip his horse toward home, lighted along the way by a servant carrying a lantern.

When he arrived, he didn't go into the rear compound but headed straight for Li P'ing-erh's quarters, where she met him at the door and brushed the snow and sleet off his clothes. Hsi-men Ch'ing was wearing a white satin riding outfit emblazoned with a blue silk mandarin square that featured an embroidered lion,[21] a "loyal and tranquil hat,"[22] black boots, a palmetto cloak, and a sable scarf. After Li P'ing-erh had taken his outer garments, he sat down on the bed, wearing only a loosely cut satin robe, and asked, "Is the young fellow asleep yet?"

"The little fellow's been playing for some time," Li P'ing-erh replied, "but he's just fallen asleep."

"Let the child sleep," Hsi-men Ch'ing directed her. "We'll have to avoid any heavy movements or we may startle him awake."

Ying-ch'un then brought them some tea. When they had finished drinking it, Li P'ing-erh asked, "How did you happen to come home from your drinking party so early today?"

"It's all because of that horse I gave him the other day," replied Hsi-men Ch'ing, "that Hsia Yen-ling went to the trouble of laying on

a feast today, entirely on my account. He also engaged the services of two young actors. After I'd enjoyed his hospitality for quite a while, I noticed that it had started to snow, so I came home early."

"Would you like some wine?" Li P'ing-erh asked. "I can get the maidservant to decant some for you. You must be chilled from making your way home through the heavy snow."

"If there's still some of that grape wine around," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "you can decant some of that for me. The wine he served at his place today was a chrysanthemum wine he had made for himself. It tasted pretty insipid to me, so I didn't really have a lot to drink."

Ying-ch'un then brought out a table with several saucers of marinated chicken appetizers, fancy fruit and vegetable delicacies, and the like. Li P'ing-erh sat down on a stool to one side and ordered a small brazier to be placed underneath the table.

While the two of them were having a drink together in Li P'ing-erh's bedroom, P'an Chin-lien, all by herself in her deserted quarters, was sitting on the bed fondling her *p'i-p'a*. On her table:

The lamp grew dim and the candle guttered out.

At one and the same time, she wanted to go to sleep but was afraid that Hsi-men Ch'ing might turn up after all, and she wanted to stay awake but kept nodding with fatigue. And on top of everything else, it was cold. There was nothing for it but to remove her headdress:

Carelessly coil her raven tresses,

let down one side of her bed curtains, and:

Sit there all wrapped up in her coverlet.

Truly:

Leaning languidly against the embroidered bed,[23]
she's too depressed to sleep;
Inside the hanging brocade bed curtains
the embroidered coverlet is empty.
"It's all too obvious that my fickle lover
has lightly abandoned me.

How could he bring himself to thus betray
my ever loving heart?”

Once again she started to sing, to the same tune as before:

I hate my fickle lover for lightly abandoning me.
Depressed and apart, I give way to idle annoyance.

She called Ch’un-mei over to her once more, saying, “Go outside and take another look to see if your father’s showed up or not; and report back to me right away.”

Ch’un-mei went out and returned after some time, saying, “Mother, you still delude yourself into thinking Father hasn’t come home, do you? When Father came home he couldn’t be bothered coming in here. Who’s that drinking wine in the Sixth Lady’s rooms if it isn’t him?”

Nothing might have happened if the woman had not heard these words, but having heard them:

It was just as if she were being stabbed in the heart
with one knife after another.

She cursed him a number of times for a fickle scoundrel, and, before she knew it, with a gush, the tears began to flow from her eyes. Putting her *p’i-p’a* high out of reach, she continued her song:

They say, “Murder may be excused;
But reason cannot be evaded.”[24]
“No fickle deed escapes the eye of Heaven.”

“Just thinking about it reminds me how much I love him, on the one hand, and how much I hate him, on the other.”

“The pain of heartache is hard to dispel.”
“In a sorrowful breast depression feeds on itself.”

“You lousy, heartless lover!” she cried out. “What’s she got that I haven’t got?

This salt is just as salty;

This vinegar just as sour.[25]
This brick is just as thick;
This tile just as thin.[26]
Then, one fine day, you:
Abandoned the old in favor of the new."[27]

You've, "Cast off a sweet peach,
To seek out a sour date."[28]

"I never should have fallen for you in the first place."

While I've completely, "Misread the stars
on your steelyard."[29]

Coda:
Whenever I think of it,
it really burns me up!
You've ruined the springtime
of my youth.
From the way you've walked out on me, it's clear:
You may have what it takes to get started,
but you won't carry through.[30]

Truly:

If you're going to be a human being,
don't be a woman;
Or your every joy and sorrow will be
dependent on another.[31]
It's the old story of the, "Fond female
and the fickle fellow";[32]
If only she hadn't taken him so seriously
to begin with.

Once again she started to sing, to the same tune as before:

I'll always remember the first time we met;

When I fondly imagined we'd grow old together.

"Who would have thought that today he'd have a change of heart; that one fine day he'd lightly cast me aside and pay me no further heed? It's just like those times when:"

The Ch'u peak was shrouded in clouds;[33]
The Blue Bridge was inundated by water;[34]
The male and female phoenixes were driven asunder.

"So that now:

Though we talk, face to face,
Our hearts are separated by a thousand mountains.[35]
Though divided by a single wall,
Those few feet prevent our seeing each other."

Our hearts are distant, though the road's not far.

"Our love has dissolved:

Like salt falling into water;
Like water falling upon sand."

Our feelings are estranged, so letters are few.

"In vain do I find myself:

Possessed of a plaint without a place to lodge it."

The Earth is thick and Heaven is high.[36]

"In vain do I find myself:

Lacking a dream to take me to the Radiant Terrace."[37]

My dreams are interrupted, my soul is troubled.[38]
My handsome lover, at the critical juncture,
has had a change of heart.

Coda:

Whenever I think of it,
   it really burns me up!
You've ruined the springtime
   of my youth.
From the way you've walked out on me, it's clear:
You may have what it takes to get started,
   but you won't carry through.[39]

Hsi-men Ch'ing was drinking wine with Li P'ing-erh in her bedroom when he suddenly heard the sound of someone playing the *p'i-p'a* in a nearby dwelling. "Who's playing the *p'i-p'a?*" he asked.

"It's the sound of the Fifth Lady, over there, playing her *p'i-p'a,*" replied Ying-ch'un.

"So the Fifth Lady hasn't gone to bed yet," said Li P'ing-erh. "Hsiu-ch'un, run over there and ask the Fifth Lady to come have a drink of wine. Say, 'It's Mother who invites you.' "

When Hsiu-ch'un had gone, Li P'ing-erh hastily directed Ying-ch'un, "Put another place at the table and set out a wine cup and chopsticks."

Some time later, Hsiu-ch'un came back and reported, "The Fifth Lady has already taken down her hair. She won't come."

"Ying-ch'un," said Li P'ing-erh, "You go and ask the Fifth Lady again. Say, 'Mother and Father both invite the Fifth Lady.' "

Not long afterwards, Ying-ch'un came back and reported, "The Fifth Lady has locked the postern gate. She says she's already blown out the lamp and gone to bed."

"Don't you believe a word that little whore says," exclaimed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "Let's go over there, the two of us, and drag her here, by main force if necessary. It would be fun to play a board game with her."

Thereupon, he and Li P'ing-erh went over together and knocked at her postern gate. They had to knock for some time before Ch'un-mei came out and opened the door for them. Hsi-men Ch'ing, pulling Li P'ing-erh behind him, went right into her bedroom, where

they found the woman sitting inside the bed curtains with the *p'i-p'a* lying beside her.

"You crazy little whore!" said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "how come you have to be asked two or three times, and still refuse to come?"

Chin-lien just sat there on her bed:

Without turning a hair,[40]

and pulling a long face. It was some time before she spoke. "It's only appropriate that someone so out of favor should be relegated to this desolate chamber. As long as you're determined to let me:

Fend for myself,

what's the point of coming around to pay me any further attention? Don't waste your affections here; save them for someplace they'll be better appreciated."

"You crazy slave!" said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"An eighty-year-old crone may lack teeth,
But she's still got plenty of lip.

Sister Li is inviting you over to her place to play a board game with her. She's been waiting all this time and you still haven't come."

"What's wrong, Sister?" said Li P'ing-erh. "We've already set out the pieces over in my room. We've both got time on our hands. Come play a game and we'll wager a cup of wine on it."

"Sister Li," said Chin-lien, "the two of you go right ahead. I've already taken down my hair. You wouldn't understand, but I'm really not interested in anything at the moment. I'm going to go to bed. I don't feel free and easy like the rest of you. These last few days I've barely been hanging on. Not even a drop of:

Saffron soup or plain water,

has crossed my lips. It's all I can do nowadays to put a good face on it and go through the motions."

"You crazy slave!" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "You're perfectly fine. What's the matter with you? If you haven't been feeling well inside, why haven't you told me about it, so I could call in a doctor to examine you?"

“If you don’t believe me,” said Chin-lien, “just ask Ch’un-mei to bring me my mirror. Let me take another look. These last few days I’ve gotten so thin I hardly seem human.”

Ch’un-mei actually brought the mirror and handed it to the woman, who looked at herself by lamplight. Truly:

Ashamed to face the caltrop-patterned mirror,
  and retouch her powdered makeup;
She has wasted away on her lover’s account,
  losing the freshness of her complexion.
Closing her door, she is no longer concerned
  with the idle breeze and moonlight;
Henceforth she will leave it to the plum blossoms
  to do whatever they please.[41]

Once again she started to sing, to the same tune as before:

Ashamed to face the caltrop-patterned mirror;
Too listless to paint in my moth eyebrows;
Secretly, my spirits have wasted away,
My good looks have become ravaged,
I am utterly emaciated and none too well.

Hsi-men Ch’ing snatched the mirror out of her hands and looked at himself, saying, “Am I any less emaciated than you are?”

“Who can be compared to you?” demanded Chin-lien. “Every day, what with:

  Wine by the bowl and meat by the hunk,[42]

you’re forever fattening yourself up, only the better to give other people a hard time.”

At this point, Hsi-men Ch’ing:

  Without permitting any further explanation,

sat down unceremoniously on the bed right beside her, embraced her by the neck, and gave her a kiss. Exploring underneath the quilt with his hand, he ascertained that she had not yet undressed,

whereupon he stuck both hands into her waistband and said, “My child, it’s true you’ve lost a little weight.”

“You crazy good-for-nothing!” exclaimed Chin-lien. “Your hands are ice-cold! I’m freezing to death. Did you think I was only trying to fool you? Truly:”

The fragrance has faded from the begonia’s beauty;
The clothing is slack around the willow waist.

Pearly tears cascaded over her fragrant cheeks as she continued her plaint, “Nobody knows the troubles I endure. All I can do is:

Consign my tears to my stomach.”[43]

Depression only augments my boredom,
Do what I will to dispel it;
And now, even my store of pearly tears
is utterly exhausted.

Coda:
Whenever I think of it,
it really burns the hell out of me!
You’ve ruined the springtime
of my youth.
From the way you’ve walked out on me, it’s clear:
You may have what it takes to get started,
but you won’t follow through.[44]

After a brief altercation, Hsi-men Ch’ing finally succeeded in dragging her off:

Willy-nilly, dead or alive,[45]

to Li P’ing-erh’s bedroom, where they played a board game and drank together for a while. When she got up to go, Li P’ing-erh noticed the sour expression on her face and persuaded Hsi-men Ch’ing to go over to her place to spend the night.

Truly, it was a case of:

When her waist is thin you can be sure
she's upset about something;
Traces of tears indicate the depth of
the sorrow of separation.

There is a poem that testifies to this:

Ever since their separation, she has lost
the freshness of her complexion;
Tossing and turning a myriad or a thousand times,[46]
she is too listless to leave her bed.[47]
It was only due to the intercession of P'ing-erh,
who chose to do her a favor;
That the Goddess of Witches' Mountain was able
to have her tryst with King Hsiang.[48]

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 39

HSI-MEN CH'ING HOLDS *CHIAO* RITES AT THE TEMPLE OF THE JADE EMPEROR; WU YŪEH-NIANG LISTENS TO BUDDHIST NUNS RECITING THEIR SACRED TEXTS

Emperor Wu of the Han ordained lustral rituals,
  erecting an altar at night;
Pouring libations of numinous water, he offered
  chiao rites to the immortals.
In front of the palace halls Jade Maidens
  arranged the incense tables;
At the edge of the clouds brazen colossi
  elevated dew-catching pans.[1]
When will the crimson standards of the goddess
  ever reappear in his dream?
Where are the peaches of immortality that might
  enable him to mount the phoenix?[2]
In his tomb at Mao-ling the buried armaments
  are shrouded in mist and rain;
The stone horses that mark the site are silent,
  the spreading creepers are cold.[3]

THE STORY GOES that on that occasion Hsi-men Ch'ing spent the night in P'an Chin-lien's quarters. The woman's only regret was that she couldn't:

Bore her way into his belly.[4]

Beside the pillow she:

Played up to him a thousand ways,
Ensnared him with a myriad wiles;[5]
Wiping away her tears with mermaid silk,
Responding to him with warm compliance;

hoping thereby that she could engross her lover's heart. How could she have known that Hsi-men Ch'ing had already initiated an affair on the outside with Han Tao-kuo's wife, Wang Liu-erh?

For this woman he had laid out a hundred twenty taels of silver to purchase a house on the east side of the stone bridge on Lion Street. The house consisted of a twelve-foot-wide frontage and four interior courtyards, receding along a vertical axis. The second courtyard was occupied by a passageway in addition to a nine-foot-wide reception room. The third courtyard consisted of a three-foot-wide anteroom for the display of Buddhist effigies and ancestral tablets, a six-foot-wide living apartment, in the interior of which there were the usual recessed k'ang frame and, across from it, a fire pit for burning charcoal, all of which had been newly replastered. The fourth courtyard, in addition to a six-foot-wide kitchen, contained a three-foot-wide storage room for charcoal and space in the rear for a latrine, but there is no need to describe this in detail.

Ever since they moved into their new house, the neighbors in the area were all aware that Han Tao-kuo was a manager employed by Hsi-men Ch'ing. In addition, noticing the fact that he wore an outfit of tailored damask clothing and swaggered his way along the street, and that his wife constantly did herself up till her head was aglitter with gold and made herself conspicuous by standing at the front gate, they did not dare to be remiss. All of them sent boxes of tea and presents to celebrate the housewarming. Those of middling social standing addressed them as Brother Han and Sister-in-law Han, while those of lower status addressed them as Uncle and Aunt.

Whenever Hsi-men Ch'ing came to visit, Han Tao-kuo would spend the night at the shop, leaving his wife to entertain him, so they could:

Enjoy themselves to their heart's content.

Mornings and evenings succeeded one another, and the neighbors all became aware of what was going on, but they were afraid of Hsi-men Ch'ing, who possessed both money and influence, so who would have dared to cross him? It was observed that, in the course of a month, Hsi-men Ch'ing would come to pay her a visit three or four times; that he and Wang Liu-erh were:

As hot for each other as burning charcoal;[6]

and that the clothes she wore and the household furnishings were no longer what they had been in the past.

Before anyone knew it, the twelfth month came around, and Hsi-men Ch'ing found himself busy at home preparing New Year's gifts to be sent to people in the Eastern Capital, the officials of the local prefecture and district, the local army and guard units, and the yamen of his own Embroidered Uniform Guard. Abbot Wu of the Temple of the Jade Emperor sent a disciple of his to deliver four boxes of presents to him. One box contained pork, one box contained whitebait, and two boxes contained stuffed steamed-shortcake pastries. He also delivered the texts of the memorials to Heaven and Earth customarily burnt on New Year's Eve, new spring talismans consisting of auspicious couplets to be pasted up on either side of the front gate on New Year's Day, and a writ thanking the Kitchen God for his good offices, to be burnt on the eve of his annual departure, on the twenty-fourth day of the twelfth month, to report to the Jade Emperor on the conduct of the family during the preceding year.

Hsi-men Ch'ing was in the master suite eating a meal when Tai-an brought in his card, which read, "Respectfully presented by the humble Taoist prelate of the Temple of the Jade Emperor, Wu Tsung-che." Hsi-men Ch'ing opened the boxes to take a look and said, "He is someone who has left home to become a priest, yet I have put him to the trouble of sending me these generous gifts."

He then instructed Tai-an, "Go immediately and get Shu-t'ung to seal up a tael of silver and send a card to him in reply."

Yüeh-niang, who was at his side, responded to the situation by saying, "He is someone who has left home to become a priest, yet at:

The head of the year or the tail of the festival,

you are always accepting presents from him. It appears that you have forgotten the vow you made some time ago, when Sister Li bore her child, to sponsor a performance, of such and such a magnitude, of the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal. You might as well have him perform it."

"It's lucky you mentioned it," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "I vowed to sponsor a performance of a hundred twenty degrees of the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal, but I completely forgot about it."

"You're just an inveterate chatterbox!" exclaimed Yüeh-niang. "Whose vow was it, that you should forget it so easily? If you make a vow, in which:

The words are mouthed but the heart isn't in it,[7]

the gods will all remember it. No wonder the child is forever:

Moaning and groaning.[8]

It so happens that this unfulfilled vow is oppressing him. It's all your doing."

"In that case," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I'll fulfill my vow by arranging to have the *chiao* rites that I promised celebrated during the first month of the new year at Abbot Wu's temple."

"Yesterday," Yüeh-niang said, "Sister Li reported that the child was suffering from aches and pains and asked if there were any place where we could go to seek the protection of a religious name for him."

"Why should we go anywhere else to seek a religious name for him?" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "We might as well arrange a naming ceremony for him in Abbot Wu's temple."

Then, turning to Tai-an, he asked, "*Who* is it who came from the temple?"

"It's his second disciple, Ying-ch'un, who delivered the presents," replied Tai-an.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing thereupon stepped outside to see him, Ying-ch'un hastily strode forward and kowtowed, saying, "My master bids me express his respects to Your Honor on his behalf.

Having nothing else fit to offer on this occasion, he has sent me to deliver these memorials to Heaven and Earth, and some insignificant gifts for you to give away to someone if you like."

Hsi-men Ch'ing returned only half a salutation to him, saying, "Many thanks to your master for his generous presents."

Upon being offered a seat, the disciple demurred, saying, "How could I presume to be seated?"

"Sit down," said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "There's something I want to say to you."

The Taoist acolyte was wearing an informal skullcap on his head, his body was clad in a long black cotton gown, while below he wore sandals and white socks. Only after declining several times did he move a chair over and sit down to one side.

After drinking the new tea that Hsi-men Ch'ing called for, he asked, "What are Your Honor's commands?"

"During the first month of the new year," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "I would like to fulfill a vow that I have made by troubling your master to perform a number of *chiao* rites in your temple. On the same day, I would like to enroll my young son under your master's protection by having him bestow a religious name upon him. But I don't know whether your master will be free or not."

The acolyte hastily stood up, saying, "If Your Honor were to ordain such a thing, no matter what ceremonies anyone else might commission, my master would not presume to undertake them. Permit me to ask Your Honor, on what date would you like the ceremony to take place?"

"You might as well arrange it on the ninth," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "the birthday of His Lordship. Make it that day."

"That is, indeed, the birthday of the Jade Emperor, the Lord of Heaven," responded the acolyte, "as is clearly recorded in the *Register of the Jade Casket.*[9] Ritual authorities have declared it a suitable day for celebration. The gods of the five blessings will be in conjunction. That is a most auspicious time for the celebration of a fast or the performance of *chiao* rites.[10] On that day we will open up the main hall of the temple in order to set up an altar on Your

Honor's behalf. May I inquire of Your Honor, how elaborate would you like the rites to be?"

"Earlier this year, during the sixth month,"[11] said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "upon the occasion of siring a young son, I swore a vow to sponsor the performance of a hundred twenty degrees of the *chiao* rites of cosmic renewal. Up until now, I have been too distracted to undertake it, but I might as well arrange to fulfill the vow next month. I'll turn my young son over to your master so he can dedicate him to the protection of the Three Treasures[12] and solicit the conferral of a religious name upon him."

"May I ask," said the acolyte, "how many officiants you would like to employ on the day of the ceremony?"

"Have your master engage the services of sixteen priests," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

When they had finished speaking, his attendants provided a table and served another round of tea. Hsi-men Ch'ing first sealed up fifteen taels of silver to pay for the ceremony and then sealed up another tael as recompense for the Abbot's festival gifts.

He then went on to say, "There is no need for your master to lay out anything in the way of compensation for the celebrants. I'll see to the provision of everything required in the way of paper money, incense, candles, and so forth."

This pleased the acolyte so much he was ready to:

Fart ferociously and pee in his pants.

As he prepared to take his leave, he thanked him again and again and kowtowed more than once.

When the eighth day of the first month came round, Hsi-men Ch'ing sent Tai-an ahead to deliver a picul of white rice, a carrier-load of paper money, ten catties of government-grade candles, five catties of aloeswood, sandalwood, and mirabilite for the making of incense, and twelve bolts of porous ramie fabric, to provide for the needs of the celebrants. He also sent two bolts of capital brocade, two jugs of southern wine, four fresh geese, four fresh chickens, a pair of pig's trotters, a leg of lamb, and ten taels of silver, as a gratuity for Kuan-ko's naming ceremony. Hsi-men Ch'ing had also

sent out invitations, inviting his brothers-in-law Wu K'ai and Hua Tzu-yü, Ying Po-chüeh, and Hsieh Hsi-ta to join him for the ceremony. The same day, Ch'en Ching-chi also rode out on donkeyback to make an obeisance on Hsi-men Ch'ing's behalf.

On the ninth, Hsi-men Ch'ing did not go to the yamen but got up bright and early, donned his official cap and girdle, set off on his large white horse, followed by a retinue of servants:

Clamoring in front and crowding behind,

and proceeded out the East Gate in the direction of the Temple of the Jade Emperor. From a distance he could see the bunting and pennants and the temporary arches spanning the street, with their announcements of the nature of the ceremony. He had proceeded no more than about five li outside the gate when he arrived at the Temple of the Jade Emperor and dismounted outside the gate. When he opened his eyes wide and took a good look, truly, it was an imposing temple edifice, resembling a celestial palace in its construction. Behold:

The verdant pines are luxuriant,
The emerald cypresses are dense.[13]
Gilt nails emboss vermilion gates,[14]
Jade arches cast shadows within the sacred halls;
Azure tiles bedeck sculpted eaves,[15]
Embroidered drapes hang over jeweled balustrades.[16]
The forty-two-foot-wide great hall,
Displays an imperial plaque in gold characters;
The two long colonnades flanking it,[17]
Exhibit colorful frescoes of gods and generals.
Amid the shadows of auspicious clouds,
The gateways with their entablatures
  reach high into the azure skies;[18]
Under the light of a propitious haze,
The Yü-lo Terrace of Grand Veil Heaven[19]
  soars straight into the milky way.
In their golden palaces,

Are arrayed the presiding deities
of the Thirty Two Heavens;[20]
In the White Jade Capitoline,[21]
They emit a myriad rays of light
from between their eyebrows.[22]
Outside the gates of the Three Heavens,[23]
Li-lou and Shih-k'uang manifest
their bellicosity;[24]
Beside the stairs, to left and right,
The White Tiger and Green Dragon show
their intrepidity.[25]
Before the main hall, immortal consorts
and Jade Maidens,
Attired in roseate shawls present
offerings of tulips;
Beneath the jade steps, the four ministers
and nine chamberlains,
Shod in red shoes do homage before
vermilion phoenix gates.
On a nine-dragon throne sits the
indestructible golden body,[26]
Of the supreme patriarch of the
myriad heavens,
The Jade Emperor and prime deity,
surnamed Chang.[27]
On his head he wears the royal crown
with twelve tassels;[28]
His body is clad in an azure-hued
imperial dragon robe;
His waist is bound by a girdle adorned
with Indigo Field jade.[29]
Correlating himself with the eight
trigrams and nine palaces,[30]
Grasping in his hands a tablet
of white jade,

He monitors compliance with the three refuges
and five precepts.[31]
When the metal bell is struck,
The sentient beings of three chiliocosms[32]
all confess their allegiance.
When the jade chime is sounded,
The myriad phenomena in their diversity[33]
unite to worship the ultimate.
In the Homage to Heaven Pavilion,
Empyreal breezes waft down the sound
of pacing the void.[34]
On the Altar for Ritual Performance,
Moonlit nights make audible the tinkle
of immortal pendants.
Just such as this must surely be the
true Purple Elysium;[35]
What need is there to seek elsewhere
the Isles of the Blest?[36]

As Hsi-men Ch'ing entered through the main gate, he noticed that, suspended from either side of the first entablatured gateway, there was a pair of seven-foot-long vermilion tablets on which were inscribed in large characters these parallel statements:

The shining zodiac is revealed in the sky,
Auspiciously opening the celestial portals
of the Nine Heavens,
As we greet golden chariots with their halcyon canopies
and acquire grace.
The mysterious altar is bathed in sunlight,
Brightly illuminating the heraldic pennants
of the myriad sages,
As we incant the holy scriptures in their jeweled cases
and preach salvation.

When he reached the main hall, there was suspended a twenty-four-character announcement of the ritual to be performed, written in a large script, which read:

Numinous Treasure[37] ritual altar erected in order to:

Recompense Heaven and compensate Earth,[38]
Requite the state for benefits received,
Enact nine recitations of the *Jade Pivot*,[39]
Fulfill the covenant by conferring a name,
And universally bestow auspicious fortune.

To either side there hung the following parallel statements:

Anterior Heaven[40] establishes the ultimate;
Looking up to the loftiness of the Great Tao,
We are able to display our utmost sincerity.
The Supernal Emperor accords his presence;
Scrutinizing the sedulousness of the rituals,
By means of which we requite his vast favor.

Hsi-men Ch'ing proceeded to the front of the incense table in the altar space, where a young attendant offered him a basin and towel. When he had finished washing his hands, a verger knelt down and requested him to offer incense. A rug was laid for him on which he completed the ceremony of paying homage to the altar.

It so happens that Abbot Wu's personal name was Tsung-che, and his religious name was Tao-chen. He was of imposing stature and had a full beard, an uninhibited temperament,[41] a wide circle of acquaintances, and a charitable disposition. At present he was serving as the abbot of the Temple of the Jade Emperor. For this reason many persons of high status and prominent officials chose to patronize him. The *chiao* rituals and other ceremonies that he presided over were sure to be all that they should be, and, in:

Welcoming visitors and treating guests,[42]

his manner was congenial. He also had three to five disciples and acolytes[43] who were:

At his beck and call.[44]

The members of Hsi-men Ch'ing's brotherhood of ten frequently had *chiao* rites performed there and on birthdays and festivals did not fail to supply donations for the services performed. How much more was this true of Hsi-men Ch'ing, who had become an officer in the judicial system and had provided lavish gifts in order to sponsor a

ritual performance and enroll his son under his protection through the bestowal of a religious name. Abbot Wu could not help but treat him with respect, and on that day he had undertaken to act as chief celebrant in presiding over the ceremony.

On his head he wore a ninefold-yang thunder cap[45] adorned with a jade ring, his body was clothed in a wide-sleeved ultramarine vestment on which were represented the constellations of the twenty eight lunar mansions, and his waist was enclosed with a silken sash.

Hastening down from the lectern, he saluted Hsi-men Ch'ing in the Taoist manner by touching one hand to his forehead, saying, "This humble Taoist has been the recipient of Your Honor's misplaced affection and repeatedly lavished gifts, to such an extent that it would be:

Discourteous to refuse, and
Embarrassing to accept.

As for the bestowal of a religious name upon your son, it is only appropriate that I should respectfully entreat the Three Treasures to assure his well-being and prolong his life. It would hardly be a sufficient return for Your Honor's past kindness for me to do so. How can I consent to accept the additional generous gifts that you have seen fit to bestow upon me? It is truly embarrassing. The compensation you have provided for the performance of the ceremony is also overly munificent, which makes me even more uneasy."

"I have put you to a great deal of trouble and effort," said Hsi-men Ch'ing:

"Without having anything to offer in return.[46]

These paltry gifts are no more than an expression of my feelings."

When they had finished exchanging amenities, the Taoist priests on either side came up to salute him, and he was invited to retire to the abbot's outer quarters, an eighteen-foot-wide open chamber called Pine Crane Studio. It was embellished on all sides with translucent vermilion latticework and was a pleasant place to sit while being served tea. Hsi-men Ch'ing observed that the four walls

were whitewashed, an ornamental rock formation was elegantly displayed, and the chairs and tables in the room were shiny. On the left and right sides were suspended the following parallel lines:

From the Yellow Crane Tower he ascends
in broad daylight;[47]
Over the Tung-t'ing Lake he has passed
for the third time.[48]

On the back wall were a pair of framed hanging scrolls displaying the following couplet in cursive calligraphy:

Raising two sleeves swelled by a clear breeze[49]
we posture like cranes;
Facing a chamber suffused with bright moonlight
we expound the scriptures.[50]

Hsi-men Ch'ing had no sooner sat down than he instructed his page boy, Ch'i-t'ung, "Take the horse and go to fetch Master Ying the Second. I fear he may not have a horse available, otherwise he ought to have been here by now."

"The donkey ridden by your son-in-law is still here," said Tai-an.

"That will do," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, and he ordered Ch'i-t'ung, "Mount it quickly and go to fetch him."

Ch'i-t'ung then led the donkey out the temple gate, mounted it, and went straight off on his errand.

Abbot Wu, having finished with the scripture he was reciting, came down from the lectern, offered his guest a cup of tea, and sat down to chat with Hsi-men Ch'ing.

"Cognizant as I am of the:

Single-minded sincerity,[51]

with which Your Honor reveres the gods," he said, "I could hardly presume to offend you by being remiss. The entire clerical staff got up at the fourth watch and reported to the altar in order to commence the task of incanting the various sacred texts and the *Scripture on the Deeds of the Jade Emperor*.[52] Today we will perform in their entirety the rituals of the three audiences and the nine recitations of the *Jade Pivot*. I have also prepared a document containing the eight characters that determine your son's horoscope

and presented it before the Three Treasures, conferring upon him the religious name Wu Ying-yüan, and invoking the wish that:

> The Grand Monad, the Director of Destiny,
> And T'ao K'ang, whose cognomen is Ho-yen,[53]
> Shall eternally guarantee his longevity,
> And maintain his wealth and distinction.

In addition, I have taken it upon myself to augment the program with twenty-four degrees of ritual expressing gratitude to Heaven and Earth, twelve degrees in praise of the Sovereign Deity, and twenty-four degrees for the salvation of the departed, making a *chiao* ceremony of one hundred eighty degrees in all."

"You have gone to a lot of trouble," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Before long the ritual drum began to sound and Hsi-men Ch'ing was invited to enter the altar space and peruse the documents. Changing into his scarlet ceremonial robe with its variegated mandarin square featuring an embroidered lion, and wearing a girdle round his waist decorated with a plaque of gilded rhinoceros horn, Hsi-men Ch'ing entered the altar space, where a lector, who was standing by in his crimson mantle of descent,[54] proceeded to declaim the text of the announcement, laying out the nature and purpose of the ceremony, as follows:

> In order to uphold the Way and invoke grace, fulfill the *chiao* rites and ensure well-being, the faithful office holder Hsi-men Ch'ing, resident of such and such a precinct and subprecinct of Ch'ing-ho district in Shantung province of the Great Sung Empire, who was born at midnight on the twenty-eighth day of the seventh month in the year *ping-yin;* joined by his wife, née Wu, who was born at midnight on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the year *wu-ctien.*

"Are there any other relations of yours that I have failed to include?" the lector interrupted his recitation to ask.

"Just add my spouse, née Li," Hsi-men Ch'ing replied, "who was born at noon on the fifteenth day of the first month in the year *hsin-*

wei, and our son, Kuan-ko, who was born at 4:00 P.M. on the twenty-third day of the sixth month in the year *ping-shen*."

> On behalf of myself and my aforesaid dependents, I, Hsi-men Ch'ing, wish on this occasion to express my sincere devotion, and invoke your vast magnanimity. Insignificant creature that I am, a representative of the least of the Three Powers,[55] in my comings and goings, rising and repose, I am constantly aware of the protection of dragon kings and devas; as the seasons of cold and heat alternate, I am forever conscious of the support vouchsafed by deities and sages. By office enrolled in the ranks of military officials, I am fortunate to have been attached to the Palace Guard. Basking in the gracious light of imperial favor, I enjoy the disposition of generous emoluments. Ever since my appointment to office in the judicial system, I have sought a means to repay my debt of gratitude for the glorious age in which I have been born and the protection and support on which I rely. For this reason I am sponsoring the performance of a *chiao* rite of twenty-four degrees, to requite Heaven and Earth for their vast favor, and repay the imperial sovereign for his liberal beneficence. In addition I am sponsoring a *chiao* rite of twelve degrees, on this occasion of the birthday of the Lord of Heaven, in praise of the various sovereign lords and perfected lords, and to solicit the extension of the five blessings, and invite the descent of the heavenly worthies. Also, on the twenty-third day of the sixth month of last year, my secondary wife, née Li, gave birth to a son, Kuan-ko, and in order to pray for:
>
> An untroubled accouchement, and
> A fortunate parturition,

I promised to entrust my aforesaid son, Kuan-ko, to the protection of the Three Treasures, under the religious name of Wu Ying-yüan, in the hope that he would reach maturity in safety. Moreover, I vowed before Heaven and Earth to sponsor the performance of a *chiao* rite of one hundred twenty degrees, to ensure the continuation of my paternal line, and prolong the life of my child. Also, in order to pray for the salvation of the souls of the departed ancestors of the Hsi-

men household for the past three generations, my grandfather Hsi-men Ching-liang, my grandmother, née Li, my father Hsi-men Ta, my mother, née Hsia, my deceased wife, née Ch'en, together with the souls of those who died before and will die after them, whether they should have ascended to Heaven or fallen into Hell, I have sponsored the performance of a *chiao* ceremony of twenty-four degrees, in the expectation that with the merciful assistance of the power of the Tao, they will all be entitled to rebirth in a higher sphere. The entire program thus consists of a *chiao* ceremony of one hundred eighty degrees, which I beseech you in your transforming mercy to acknowledge as the fulfillment of my vow. On this, the ninth day of the first month of the third year of the Hsüan-ho reign period,[56] on the propitious occasion of the birthday of the Lord of Heaven, I have reverently engaged the services of these duly ordained Taoist officiants to perform a plenary, day and night, Numinous Treasure ritual, in order to recompense Heaven and compensate Earth, requite the state and fulfill the covenant, glorify the spirits and ensure well-being, confer a religious name and recite the scriptures, and universally bestow auspicious fortune. I hereby invoke the presence of the presiding worthies of the Three Realms and invite the participation of the deities of the myriad heavens, that I may daily derive joy from exposure to their pure radiance, as they go in and out through the Golden Gate; and in the hope that they will periodically bestow desirable posts upon me, and vouchsafe me patents of nobility that will enhance my prestige, that my entire household may ever enjoy equal well-being, and that in all four seasons their public and private undertakings shall prosper. It is only by respectfully invoking the power of the Tao that such great blessings may be anticipated. Such is my reverent intent.

When the text of the announcement had been declaimed, a large number of documents and talismans were laid out, which the lector invited Hsi-men Ch'ing to examine one by one.

Opening up the first of these, he said, "This is the text of the announcement of your son's election to quit the world and devote himself to a Taoist vocation, and a petition of invocation addressed

to the Sovereign Deity who presides over the Three Realms of the Three Heavens, the Perfected Lords of the Ten Directions, the Three Officers and Four Sages, the executive officers of the Great Mystic Metropolis, the celestial official the Perfected Lord of August Satisfaction, the celestial official the Perfected Lord of the Bureau of *Chiao* Rites, and the celestial official the Perfected Lord of the Bureau of Divine Descent, requesting their presence in the altar space in order to validate and superintend the proceedings."

Opening up the second document, he said, "This is a petition of invocation addressed to the Great Heaven-reaching Life-governing Sacred God of the Eastern Peak, the Goddess of Sons and Grandsons, the Sacred Mother Goddess *Who* Superintends Birth and Safeguards Confinement, as well as the gods who received your prayer on the occasion when you first made your promise, asking them to clear your account by accepting today's ceremony as the fulfillment of your original vow. The officiants will burn perpetual incense to the numinous deities of the three religions to ensure that they clear the account created by Your Honor's original vow, and also issue a summons to the functionaries of the seventy-five bureaus of the underworld, requiring their attendance in the altar space to accept the prayers for the salvation of the souls of the departed members of your family and escort them to rebirth in Heaven.

"This lot consists of orders authorizing the submission of memorials to the gates of the Three Heavens by the Jade Maidens, numinous officers, gods and generals, functionaries of the Merit Sections who transmit talismans, tutelary gods, and other relevant deities.

"This one is a potent talisman summoning the myriad gods of the Heaven of Jade Clarity and requiring them to take cognizance of the official documents dispatched by the high priest.

"This one is a talisman addressed to the Great General of the Bell of Fluid Gold and Fire,[57] the concretization of the Yang Rays of the Nine Stars of the Big Dipper, commanding him to open the Gates of Heaven."

When they had finished looking at the material there, the lector conducted Hsi-men Ch'ing to another table, where he opened up the first document and said, "This is an invocation issued at the morning audience, inviting the Unflatterable Grand Guardian Marshal K'ang, the Bearer of Efficacious Talismans from the Nine Heavens and Inspector of the Rites, to exercise strict supervision over the ceremony, and monitor the kitchen facilities.

"This document is an invocation inviting the Protectors of the Orthodox Way, the Four Great Marshals Ma, Chao, Wen, and Kuan,[58] and the Four Great Celestial Lords Ts'ui, Lu, Tou, and Teng,[59] to oversee the altar space and guard the portals; and inviting the Four Potent Divine Lords of the Mysterious Altar, and the Nine-headed Phoenix, the General-in-chief Who Purges Pollution,[60] to cleanse the altar space and dispel pollution in order to attract the Perfected Lords.

"This lot consists of a memorandum dispatched at the morning audience, invoking the presence of the Five Masters, and another memorandum dispatched at the evening audience thanking the Five Masters.

"This lot consists of true writs ordaining the recreation of the two cosmic entities, yin and yang, the raising of the curtain,[61] and the transformation of the altar.

"This lot consists of a yang missive inviting the General-in-chief of the Divine Empyrean Who Dispels Pollution to sound the metal bell, and a yin missive inviting the General-in-chief of the Divine Empyrean *Who* Seals the Altar to strike the jade chime.[62]

"This lot consists of invocations in seal script addressed to the Perfected Beings *Who* Preside over the Five Directions, i.e., the true writ in jade characters addressed to the Ruler of the Eastern Heaven of the Nine Pneumas, the true writ in jade characters addressed to the Ruler of the Southern Heaven of the Three Pneumas, the true writ in jade characters addressed to the Ruler of the Western Heaven of the Seven Pneumas, the true writ in jade characters addressed to the Ruler of the Northern Heaven of the Five Pneumas, and the true writ in jade characters addressed to the Ruler of the

Central Heaven of the One Pneuma, inviting these sovereign deities, the Five Ancients, to preside over the boundaries of the altar space, in order to validate and superintend the proceedings. Each of them is drawn in the color appertaining to the direction in question.[63]

"This lot consists of nine memorials, i.e., the one submitted at the time of the first recitation of the scripture during the morning audience to the Jade Clarity Perfected Ruler of the Most Exalted Divine Empyrean, the Great Sovereign of Long Life of the Southern Apogee; the one submitted at the time of the second recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Azure Empyrean, the Great Sovereign of Verdant Efflorescence Who Nurtures Life of the Eastern Apogee; the one submitted during the third recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Emerald Empyrean, the Celestial Worthy of the Thunderclap of Universal Salvation That Resonates with the Primal Essence of the Nine Heavens; the one submitted at the time of the fourth recitation during the noon audience to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Jade Empyrean, the Great Sovereign Ancestor of Thunder of the Nine Heavens; the one submitted at the time of the fifth recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Alabaster Empyrean, the Upper Clarity Great Celestial Emperor of the Grand Monad in the Azure Jade Palace of Purple Tenuity; the one submitted at the time of the sixth recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Cosmic Empyrean, the Great Sovereign of the Cavernous Depths of the Six Heavens; the one submitted at the time of the seventh recitation during the evening audience to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Purple Empyrean, the Celestial Monarch and Sovereign Lord of the Subaqueous Realm; the one submitted at the time of the eighth recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Luminous Empyrean, the Suzerain and Perfected Lord of the Blue Citadel and the Bureau of Merited Supplementary Longevity; and the one submitted at the time of the ninth recitation to the Ruler of the Most Exalted Crimson Empyrean, the Perfected Lord and Investigation Commissioner of the Nine Heavens.[64] These nine memorials are accompanied by memoranda addressed to the four bureaus in charge of undeserved emolument, retribution, concealed injustice, and cumulative

accomplishment, and thanking the said four bureaus for their attention.

“This lot consists of orders authorizing the high priest to respectfully submit a memorial before the jade steps of the Three Heavens during the noon audience, accompanied by the Princess of Yellow Purity,[65] and the Red-robed Guardian,[66] and requiring the relevant functionaries of the Merit Sections on duty this day, those responsible for dispatching the edicts and talismans generated by the *chiao* ceremony, and their armored escorts, to take cognizance thereof, and transmit them safely to the Hall for the Reception of Memorials.

“This lot consists of various Numinous Treasure talismans addressed to the General-in-chief of the Three Heavens Who Holds the Precious Registers, along with the Golden Dragon and Scaly Dragon Mounted Couriers, the Messenger Boys of the Ministry of Fire, and so forth, too many to be enumerated in full.

“This lot consists of a benedictory memorial to be presented at the evening audience, rendering thanks for favors received and expressing sincere devotion, as well as orders for the distribution of quantities of imitation cloud-crane patterned brocade, paper money,[67] and paper effigies of the gods[68] appropriate for the one hundred eighty degrees of the *chiao* ceremony, including the presentations of memorials, and the recitations of scripture.”

Moving to yet another table, the lector continued, “This lot consists of the documents conferring a religious name upon your son and entrusting him to the protection of the Three Treasures, along with an amulet on its cord, and the authorization papers that go with it. As for the rest, there is no time to examine them all in detail. I trust that you will be so good as to express your gratitude to His Reverence the High Priest, who is really exerting himself on your behalf today.”

Hsi-men Ch’ing thereupon lit some incense in front of the principal altar table[69] and put his signature to the documents. His attendants then presented a bolt of silk to Abbot Wu in return for

his signing the papers. Only after repeatedly refusing to accept the proffered gift did he direct a young attendant to put it away.

After this, a Taoist acolyte in a corner of the hall began to strike the ritual drum with a rub-a-dub-dub that sounded like a roll of spring thunder, and the entire group of celebrants joined in to produce a peal of music. Abbot Wu, clad in a crimson Taoist robe with variegated cloud-patterned embroidery, shod in red cloud-heeled flying-duck shoes,[70] and holding an ivory tablet in his hands, prepared to dispatch the documents, take his place at the altar, and summon the generals. As bells were sounded on either side, a verger ushered Hsi-men Ch'ing into the altar space, where he offered incense before the altar of the Three Treasures and the deities whose effigies were ranged on left and right. When Hsi-men Ch'ing opened his eyes wide and took a good look, truly, the altar space was laid out in an imposing fashion. Behold:

> The stations accord with the five directions,
> The altar space is divided into eight stages.
> On the top level homage is rendered to,
> The Three Pure Ones and the Four August Ones,[71]
> The Perfected Lords of the Eight Poles,
> The Nine Empyreans, the Ten Directions,
> And the various sages of the cloud palaces.
> On the middle level homage is rendered to,
> The deities of the Five Peaks and the Four Rivers,
> The tutelary gods of the soil and of walls and moats,
> The dwellers in the blessed abodes and grotto heavens,
> And all the spirits of the broad and massive earth.
> On the bottom level homage is rendered to,
> The officers of the dark realm of the nether regions,
> The underworld courts of Mount Lo-feng,[72]
> The gods of the rivers, lakes, and seas,
> And the denizens of the watery kingdom of the grave.
> The twin ranks of officiants at the rites are in place,
> The officers and marshals in the hall are duly arrayed.
> As an auspicious nimbus of incense arises,

A thousand painted candles disperse their light;
Amid clustering blossoms on the brocade mat,
A hundred silver lamps diffuse their brilliance.
In the Pavilion of Heaven and Earth,
To left and right, the Golden Lads and Jade Maidens,
Pair after pair, lift high their feather flabella;
In the Hall of the Jade Emperor,
On either side, holding basins and presenting swords,
Rank after rank, teem pennants with divine effigies.
The breeze is clear, from the Three Worlds are heard
sounds of pacing the void;
The moonlight is cold, from the Nine Heavens descend
veils of nocturnal mist.
When the metal bell is struck,
The high priest proffers his memorial, presenting
it to the Sovereign of the Void;
When the jade pendants tinkle,
The chief cantor advances to the altar, doing his
homage before the Jade Emperor.
On the crimson silk robe, stars and
constellations glitter;
On the hibiscus-petal cap, golds and
greens blend their hues.
The divine marshals who guard the altar
manifest their bellicosity;
The duty officers of the Merit Sections
display their intrepidity.
The Taoist priests collectively declaim
the sacred litanies,
Ascending the Jade Terrace, they pour
libations and proffer flowers;
The Perfected Beings join in incanting
the numinous texts,
Holding their ritual swords, they tread
the stars and pace the dipper.

The Green Dragon imperceptibly advances
along the shining zodiac;
The white crane with a flutter descends
from the Purple Palace.[73]

No sooner had Hsi-men Ch'ing finished making the rounds of the various altar tables in order to light incense than he was invited by the attendants to return to his seat in a compartment of the Pine Crane Studio, where:

The floor was covered with brocade carpets, and
The brazier was burning animal-shaped briquettes.

Before long, Ying Po-chüeh and Hsieh Hsi-ta appeared.

After greeting him with a bow, each of them produced a sealed mace of silver in lieu of the customary present of tea, saying, "The truth is that we had intended to bring you some tea, but it would have taken us too far out of our way. We hope these paltry gifts may serve, instead, to alleviate the cost of a cup of tea."

Hsi-men Ch'ing rejected their offerings with the words, "You needn't have bothered. I only invited you in order to keep me company for a while, you didn't have to go to all this trouble. My brother-in-law, Wu K'ai, will provide tea. Everything is already taken care of. There's no need for you to come up with anything like that."

Ying Po-chüeh hastily made another bow, saying, "If Brother is really in earnest, we might as well take them back."

Then, turning to Hsieh Hsi-ta, he continued, "It's all your doing. I told you Brother would never accept anything from us. And now that we've come up with something, we've only elicited a good scoffing for our pains."

After some time, Wu K'ai and Hua Tzu-yü appeared, each of them bringing two boxes of fancy tea and assorted delicacies as gifts for the occasion. Hsi-men Ch'ing directed that these be turned over to Abbot Wu. When they had finished their tea, a vegetarian repast was laid out for everyone on two tables, replete with salty main courses, vegetarian specialties, sweetmeats, soup, and rice, lavishly

and spotlessly prepared. Hsi-men Ch'ing then discarded his formal clothes and sat down to share the morning meal with his guests.

It so happens that Abbot Wu had engaged the services of a professional storyteller who regaled them with the episode known as "The Banquet at Hung-men" from the *P'ing-hua on the Western Han Dynasty*.[74]

When Abbot Wu had finished dispatching the documents required by the *chiao* ceremony, he came over to keep them company and asked, "Will your son be coming today, or not?"

"The fact is," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "the youngster is still very frail, and my wife was afraid that he might be disturbed having to come such a distance, so he won't be here. At noontime, we can present some clothes of his before the Three Treasures for their acceptance and blessing. It will amount to the same thing."

"I had thought of that myself," said Abbot Wu. "That will be fine."

"Everything else about him is all right," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "but he is somewhat timid. We've got three or four maidservants and waiting women at home, who take turns looking after him, but he's still afraid of things. They don't even dare let cats or dogs come near him."

"It's no easy thing to raise a child to adulthood," opined Abbot Wu.

As they were talking, whom should they see but Tai-an, who came in and said, "Li Kuei-chieh and Wu Yin-erh from the licensed quarter have sent Li Ming and Wu Hui here to deliver gifts of tea."

"Tell them to come in," said Hsi-men Ch'ing.

Li Ming and Wu Hui came in carrying a pair of boxes, knelt down, and opened them up for inspection. They were filled with cream puff pastries, pine pollen pastries, little molded cakes sprinkled with crystallized sugar with the character for long life embossed on their surfaces, and rose hip flavored pastry rolls. All of these, at Hsi-men Ch'ing's direction, were turned over to Abbot Wu.

Hsi-men Ch'ing then turned to Li Ming and asked, "How did you know that I was sponsoring a *chiao* ceremony here today?"

“This morning,” replied Li Ming, “I happened to run into Uncle Ch’en Ching-chi on the road, riding a donkey. It was only after I asked where he was headed that I found out you were sponsoring a ritual performance here today. When I got home I told Li Kuei-chieh and Aunty Li the Third about it and said to them, ‘Why don’t you act quickly and buy some presents for the occasion?’ Later they got in touch with Wu Yin-erh, and so we are here. They asked us to convey their best wishes to you, and to say that they would have come in person but didn’t know if it would be appropriate. These boxes of inferior tea things are only for you to give away to someone if you like.”

“The two of you must stay a while and have some vegetarian fare,” directed Hsi-men Ch’ing.

Abbot Wu conducted the two young men out of their presence to a place where they could sit down. Even the porters who had come with them were all enabled to eat their fill.

To make a long story short, when the time came for the noon audience, after the memorials had been dispatched, Abbot Wu showed them a large portable table[75] on which there had been prepared:

Cone-shaped piles of fruit, ingot-shaped cakes, and
High-stacked pyramids of square-shaped confectionery,

together with forty saucers and bowls containing different kinds of steamed and fried vegetarian dishes ingeniously made to counterfeit nonvegetarian fare, sweetmeats, soup, and rice, as well as a jug of Chin-hua wine. Also prepared for Kuan-ko there were a jet satin gold lamé Taoist cap, a jet silk Taoist robe, a little undergown of green cloud-patterned satin, a pair of little white damask socks, a pair of little blue Lu-chou pongee shoes with stitched facings, a sash of yellow wool yarn, a yellow cord bestowed upon him under the aegis of the Three Treasures, a locket on a purple cord bestowed upon him under the aegis of the Goddess of Sons and Grandsons,[76] a silver amulet to be worn around the neck, on which were incised the words:

Gold and jade fill up the hall,[77]

Long life, wealth, and success,[78]

and a talisman of yellow damask designed to dispel pollution, on which were written in vermilion ink the eight characters:

The Grand Monad, the Director of Destiny,
And T’ao K’ang, whose cognomen is Ho-yen,

and which was attached to the aforesaid yellow cord. The above objects were all displayed on the table in square trays, along with four trays of preserved fruit.

A young attendant was instructed to take the texts of the various documents and petitions written on safflower red paper,[79] and an itemized program, in sequential order, of all the rituals performed during the three audiences, out of the scripture cases in which they had been put, and show them to Hsi-men Ch’ing, after which they were packed up with the other gifts enumerated above, making eight carrier-loads in all, and sent ahead to the Hsi-men residence.

Hsi-men Ch’ing was extremely pleased and promptly dispatched Ch’i-t’ung to accompany them home, with instructions to reward the acolyte in charge of the consignment with two handkerchiefs and a tael of silver.

To resume our story, that day was P’an Chin-lien’s birthday, and Wu K’ai’s wife, Old Mrs. P’an, Aunt Yang, and Big Sister Yü had all forgathered in the master suite, where they were sitting with Wu Yüeh-niang and the other female members of the household. When they heard that a vegetarian repast had been delivered from the temple, together with lots of preserved fruit, and a portable table for the display of gifts, so much, in fact, that not even four tables could accommodate it, they all bustled out to see for themselves.

“Sister Li,” exclaimed P’an Chin-lien, “why don’t you hurry out and see what’s here? Your son’s master from the temple has sent it all for him. There are lots of things, including a little Taoist cap, a Taoist robe, and, my, just look at this, even a pair of little shoes.”

Meng Yü-lou then stepped forward, picked them up, and examined them, saying, “Elder Sister, look at this. How clever the Taoist priests are. These little shoes have white damask soles, which have been backstitched in a pattern of interlocking lozenges. This

ornamental cloud-pattern is also very well done. My guess is they must have wives to help them, otherwise they would never be able to produce such fine stitchwork themselves."

"Needless to say," exclaimed Yüeh-niang, "as people who have left home to become priests, how could they have wives? Surely they must have hired someone to make them."

P'an Chin-lien, picking up where Yüeh-niang left off, said, "If that is evidence that Taoist priests have wives, it follows that Buddhists like Nun Wang and the abbess, here, who are good at embroidering handkerchiefs, must have husbands."

"Taoist priests," said Nun Wang, "can disguise themselves by putting a hat over their topknots and go anywhere they want. We Buddhist members of the Sangha, on the other hand, can be readily recognized whatever we do."

"I have heard tell," said Chin-lien, "that the Taoist Temple of Mystic Illumination is located right behind the Kuan-yin Nunnery where you reside. As the saying goes:

If a male convent lies next to a female convent,
Though nothing need occur, something may occur."

"This Sister Six," said Yüeh-niang, "is prone to indulge in such:

Ridiculous blatherskite."

"And this," said Chin-lien, continuing with the inventory, "is the locket on a purple cord bestowed upon him when his name was consecrated under the aegis of the Goddess of Sons and Grandsons. And here is a silver amulet to be worn around the neck, on which there are eight characters incised. It ought to look very good when he has it on. And his name is engraved on the back, Wu something or other yüan."

"That's the name chosen for him by the master," said Ch'i-t'ung, "Wu Ying-yüan."[80]

"So that's the character ying, is it?" said Chin-lien. "Elder Sister, these Taoists are impertinent. What reason could there be to change the child's surname?"

"Now see here," said Yüeh-niang, "you just don't understand the ritual involved."

Then, turning to Li P'ing-erh, she said, "Why don't you go fetch your son and bring him here so we can try out this Taoist costume on him and see what it looks like, how would that be?"

"I've just put him down for a nap," said Li P'ing-erh. "Do I need to get him up and bring him out again?"

"It won't do any harm," said Chin-lien. "Just pat him until he wakes up."

Li P'ing-erh did, in fact, go after him.

Now P'an Chin-lien knew how to read, and, picking up a red paper envelope and pulling out one of the petitions that had been sent from the temple, she noticed that under Hsi-men Ch'ing's name it read, "joined by his wife, née Wu," after which there were only the words, "and his spouse, née Li," without mention of anyone else.

More than a little incensed by this, she showed it to the others, saying, "Just you tell me if that lousy ruffian, sorting people so differentially into:

Three classes and nine categories,

is practicing favoritism or not. The only one whose name is written on here is the one who bore the child. The rest of us simply don't count. We've all been:

Relegated to the realm of the superfluous."[81]

"Is Elder Sister's name there, or not?" asked Meng Yü-lou.

"If Elder Sister's name were not there," said Chin-lien, "that would really be laughable."

"That's enough," said Yüeh-niang. "As long as one of us is there, it's all the same thing. You don't mean to say that if a family had a whole troop of women, their names should all appear. Wouldn't that give the Taoist priests a laugh."

"Are we all nothing but:

The ghosts of Liu Chan's daughters?"[82]

demanded Chin-lien. "Compared to whom is it alleged that we:

Don't amount to anything?[83]

Which of us did not undergo ten months of gestation in the womb?"

As they were speaking, Li P'ing-erh came back from the front compound carrying Kuan-ko.

"Hand me his clothes," said Meng Yü-lou, "so I can help him on with them."

Li P'ing-erh held him while Meng Yü-lou fitted the Taoist cap onto his head and put the amulet around his neck, together with the two cords. The baby was so frightened at this that he closed his eyes tight and:

Hardly dared to breathe,[84]

for some time.

When Meng-Yü-lou had finished fitting him into his Taoist costume, Wu Yüeh-niang said to Li P'ing-erh, 'You ought to take these documents and petitions, along with a bundle of paper money, and go to the Buddhist chapel in the rear to burn them yourself."

After Li P'ing-erh had departed on this mission, Meng Yü-lou, who was holding the baby and playing with him, said, "Dressed in these clothes, he's just like a little Taoist priest."

Chin-lien picked up on this, saying, "A little Taoist priest, my eye! He's more like a little god."

This sally provoked a serious reprimand from Wu Yüeh-niang, who said, "Sister Six, what kind of talk is that? You mustn't speak that way about the child."

Chin-lien was at a loss for words and had nothing more to say.

After a while, the baby, who was frightened by the new clothes he was wearing, began to cry and, when Li P'ing-erh hurried over to take him and change his clothes, produced a diaperful of shit.

Meng Yü-lou laughed at this, saying, "What a fine Wu Ying-yüan! It seems that even when he shits, he's good for a trayful."

Yüeh-niang hurriedly directed Hsiao-yü to fetch some absorbent grass paper and wipe up the mess. Before long the baby reclined on Li P'ing-erh's breast and fell asleep.

"Little Brother," said Li P'ing-erh, "you seem to be tired. Mother will take you back up front and put you to sleep."

Wu Yüeh-niang then distributed the place settings of gifts that had been sent from the temple and invited Wu K'ai's wife, Aunt Yang, Old Mrs. P'an, and the others to come into the outer room and enjoy a vegetarian repast. As they did so, it gradually grew late.

It so happens that, on the eighth day of the month, because Hsi-men Ch'ing was going to participate in the *chiao* ceremony on the following day, he was expected to abstain from meat and wine. For that reason the eve of Pan Chin-lien's birthday had not been celebrated in the customary way, and it was not until he returned home on the evening of the day itself that he would be able to offer her a congratulatory cup of wine. She went out and stood by the main gate in expectation of his arrival, but how could she have anticipated that at sunset time all she could see was Ch'en Ching-chi returning home on his donkey.



Hsi-men Kuan-ko Tries on His Taoist Vestments

"Is Father on his way?" Chin-lien asked.

"I'm afraid Father will not be able to make it," said Ching-chi. "The *chiao* ceremony is not over yet. They've just begun the ritual of penance, which is likely to go on until the first watch. How likely are Taoist priests to:

Let anyone lightly out of their clutches?[85]

And after that, still to come, are the ceremony of dismissing the generals and a banquet."

When Chin-lien heard this, without saying another word, she went back to the master suite in a huff and said to Yüeh-niang, “It seems that:

Blindman Chia, the masseur, unaware of the time,
Got up at the fifth watch for nothing.
If you throw your guts over the wall,
You must resign yourself to your fate.
If the string on your waistband breaks,
On what can you depend?

Just now, I stood for a while at the gate, and all I saw was Ch’en Ching-chi coming along on his donkey. He said that Father would not be able to make it because the *chiao* rites were not yet over and had elected to send him back in his stead.”

“If he’s not coming home, so be it,” said Yüeh-niang. “That leaves us free this evening to listen to the abbess and Nun Wang recite tales of karmic cause and effect, and sing Buddhist songs.

As she was speaking, what should they see but Ch’en Ching-chi, who lifted aside the portiere and came in, already half inebriated, saying, “I’ve come to kowtow to the Fifth Lady.”

Turning to his wife, Hsi-men Ta-chieh, he said, “If there’s a goblet around, find it, and fill it with wine, so I can offer her a drink.”

“Where would I find a goblet?” said Hsi-men Ta-chieh. “All you need to do is kowtow to the Fifth Lady. If it comes to that, I’ll offer her a drink on your behalf. Just listen to that drunken voice of his. It’s just as though the *chiao* rites today were only for your benefit, that you’ve come home in such a befuddled state.”

“Is your father really not coming home?” enquired Yüeh-niang. “Is that slave, Tai-an, not returning either?”

“Father saw that the *chiao* rites were not over yet,” said Ch’en Ching-chi, “and fearing that there was no one at home to look after the place, sent me ahead for that purpose. He’s retaining Tai-an there to wait on him. The Taoist priests were importunate in their unwillingness to release me.

Willy-nilly, dead or alive,

they insisted on my drinking two or three big bumpers before letting me go."

"Who all are there with him today?" asked Yüeh-niang.

"Today there are your elder brother, Wu K'ai, Brother-in-law Hua the Elder from outside the gate, Uncle Ying the Second, Uncle Hsieh Hsi-ta, and also Li Ming and Wu Hui, the two boy actors. Now that night has fallen, who knows how long they'll carry on. Only your elder brother, Wu K'ai, has gone home today. Father insisted that Hua the Elder from outside the gate remain with them. It looks like it will be an all-night affair."

Chin-lien, noticing that Li P'ing-erh was not present, said, "Son-in-law Ch'en, even you persist in calling him Brother-in-law Hua. How he is entitled to claim such a relationship only her dead husband knows. If he were really any brother-in-law of ours, it would be appropriate to refer to him as Brother-in-law Li. How can you refer to him as Brother-in-law Hua?"

"Fifth Lady," said Ch'en Ching-chi, "you ought to emulate:

> The country girl who brings herself to marry Cheng En,[86]
> By keeping one eye open, and one eye shut.
> If a son is born too soon after the wedding,
> Who knows whose account he should be chalked up to?
> All you can do is split the difference."

"You lousy jailbird!" exclaimed Hsi-men Ta-chieh. "Hurry up and perform your kowtow. The sooner you go up front and sleep it off the better. That's enough of your delirious nonsense."

Ch'en Ching-chi thereupon asked Chin-lien to assume the position of honor and then proceeded to kowtow to her four times before staggering off for the front compound.

Before long, the room was lighted with lamps and candles, a table was set up and spread with viands, and Old Mrs. P'an, Aunt Yang, Wu K'ai's wife, and the others were all assembled. After drinks had been offered in celebration of the occasion, they all sat down and consumed the birthday noodles. When the wine ran out, the utensils were put away, and the table removed from the room.

Yüeh-niang then ordered Hsiao-yü to close the ceremonial gate between the front and rear compounds. After this, a small table was placed on the k'ang, and they all gathered around it, the two nuns occupying the center, where they burnt incense and set up a pair of wax candles, so they could listen to them recite a tale of karmic cause and effect.[87]

The abbess began the recitation as follows:

> I have heard tell that, in the *Great Buddhist Canon*, a story is told of the Buddhist Dharma, relating how the Thirty-second Patriarch[88] of the Western Heaven descended to the world to be born in the Eastern Land and transmit the mind-seal of the Buddha.[89] It was in former days, during the third year of the Hsien-heng reign period[90] of Emperor Kao-tsung of the T'ang dynasty,[91] but we will not elaborate on national affairs in the Central Kingdom. To resume our story, in P'ao-tu village of Ling-nan township, there was a certain householder, named Chang, whose family was very well-to-do, possessing quantities of gold and silver, with slaves and maidservants at their beck and call.[92] This householder had taken unto himself eight wives, who enjoyed themselves day by day, basking in diurnal luxury, enamored of romance, and neglectful of good works. It happened one day that Master Chang went out the gate for a stroll when he came upon a crowd of true believers, carrying incense, lamp-oil, polished rice, and such things, and reciting Buddha's name. Approaching them, he asked, "Where are you believers going?" One among them answered, saying, "In the first place, we are going to share a vegetarian repast, and in the second place, we are going to listen to the scriptures." The householder went on to ask, "What merit will accrue to you for fasting and listening to the scriptures?" To which the crowd of believers replied, "For humans living in this world,[93] the Buddhist Dharma is hard to hear,[94] human existence is hard to obtain.[95] As the *Lotus Sutra* puts it so well, if human beings who are fortunate, and who worship Buddha, do not give alms in this life, from whence can they

expect to receive glory and luxury, wealth and honor[96] in the life to come? As a man of yore has told us:



Ch’en Ching-chi Kowtows to His Light of Love

A dragon, upon hearing the Dharma,
achieved enlightenment;
A python, upon hearing the litany,
was reborn in Heaven.[97]

How much the more should this be true for human beings.” When Householder Chang returned home, he ordered a page boy to go into the interior of the house and invite his eight wives to come into his presence. Before long, they were all assembled in the hall, where the householder addressed them, saying, “Ladies, I am presently going to go to the Huang-mei Temple to embark upon the religious life. I will divide the family property into eight parts, and allow each of you to fend for yourselves. It seems to me that at the present time you and I are preoccupied with the pleasures of the moment, with no consideration for the life to come.[98] If we do not take up religious practice, in hope of escaping the fiery pit, we are sure to fall into the three evil paths and the five forms of suffering.” One of his wives, upon hearing these words, said, “Sir, you possess the eight-treasured body of an arhat. What karmic impediment could you be encumbered by? Your situation is not to be compared to that of us womenfolk, who in the process of giving birth to boys and girls inevitably offend the purity of the gods. You can engage in your religious practices at home, and the eight of us will take the burden of your guilt upon ourselves. There is no need for you to leave.” Truly:

When his wife undertook to dissuade
her husband;
The householder laughed sardonically
several times.

The abbess having recited for a while, it was time for Nun Wang to continue with a gatha, and Wu Yüeh-niang, Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P’an Chin-lien, Sun Hsüeh-o, and Hsi-men Ta-chieh, as well as Yü-hsiao, all chimed in by reciting the Buddha’s name in unison. Nun Wang then continued with a gatha in decasyllabic verse:

All eight of his, womenfolk,
asked him to stay;
Saying to him, “Don’t go away.
Practice at home.
Now if you, are so cruel,
as to leave us;

The little ones, will be distraught,
'twill break your heart.
We sisters here, will be forlorn,
with nowhere to go;
How will we, one and all,
get through the day?
Since our youth, we've been mates,
partnered for life;
If on the way, we're left behind,
who can we trust?"
Boy tugs at dad, girl tugs at mom,
beat breast stamp feet;[99]
The whole house, old and young,
cry out in pain.

To the tune "Sutra in Letters of Gold":

When his wives heard these words,
they wept unceasingly;
Urgently trying to deter their husband
from entering the cloister.
"Think of your home;
Remain ever united with your children.
Don't go far away;
Practice at home, it all amounts
to the same thing."

Prose:

The householder then said, "I wish to thank all of you eight wives. In the future, when I am dead in the world of the shades, you can take the burden of my guilt upon yourselves. Today I will offer you a cup of wine, in the hope that tomorrow, when you appear before King Yama, you will undertake this responsibility, as promised." As they drank wine together, the householder decided to play a trick, saying, "Wives, will one of you trim the wick of the lamp for me?" While the householder thereby fooled his wife

into trimming the wick, he blew the lamp out, causing all eight of his wives to turn pale and call hastily to a maidservant, “Quickly, relight the lamp.”

The householder had pulled out
a steel-bladed sword;
Which frightened all eight of
his wives half to death.

Gatha in decasyllabic verse:

The old householder, called a maidservant,
to relight the lamp;
With the steel blade, held in his hand,
he pointed at his wives.
“Which of you, took the bright lamp,
and blew it out;
Coveting my wealth, taking my life,
to marry someone else?
If you don’t confess, with a single stroke,
your head will fall”;
Each one of them, was sore afraid,
falling to the ground.
All eight of his, elderly wives,
hastily knelt down;
“We beg you sir, temper your rage,
spare our poor lives.
It’s clear you, with one breath,
blew out the lamp;
In your cups, flushed with wine,
waving your sword.
If you really, kill us all,
eight of your wives;
In Hell itself, we’ll tell King Yama,
to seize your soul.”

Prose:

The householder laughed sardonically, and then said to his eight wives, “You’re fooling me. If you won’t even acknowledge that you blew out the lamp right in front of my eyes; when I am in the world of the shades, how could you take the burden of my guilt upon yourselves? You eight womenfolk are merely fooling me. It’s enough to give anyone possessed of age and virtue a laugh.” This speech reduced his wives to silence. The householder thought to himself, “Wealth and success in this life are all the results of religious practice in former lives.”[100] Then he called in a page boy and told him, “Quickly, go and load several carts with incense, lamp-oil, rice, and flour, together with every kind of vegetarian fare, cash, valuables, and such things. I am going to go to the Huang-mei Temple in order to commit myself to fasting on vegetarian fare and listening to the scriptures.”

To the tune “Sutra in Letters of Gold”:

“Ladies, listen to my explication
of first things.
The Brahman prince, Sakyamuni,
forsook his realm.
Ridding himself of desires,
He sought a means of salvation for all men.
For which he gave away everything,
Attaining immortal fame for all time
in the world of men.”

The householder departed that very day
to take up the religious life;
All his relatives and neighbors assembled
to see him off upon his way.

After Nun Wang had recited for a while, Wu Yüeh-niang said, “Our preceptors must be hungry. Pray set the scripture aside for the moment, and have something to eat.”

She then told Hsiao-yü to set out four vegetable dishes, two salty main courses, and four saucers containing sugar crisps, steamed-

shortcake pastries, chrysanthemum-flavored cakes, and twisted crullers, of which she invited Wu K'ai's wife, Aunt Yang, and Old Mrs. P'an to partake, in company with the two nuns.

"We really shouldn't," said Wu K'ai's wife. "We've all just eaten our fill. Offer something to Aunt Yang though. She's been on a vegetarian diet."

Yüeh-niang hastened to take small lacquer dishes adorned with gold tracery and fill them with a sample of each of the delicacies.

Offering them first to the two nuns, she then offered one to Aunt Yang, saying, "Won't you have a little something to keep our two preceptors company?"

"My Lord Buddha!" the old lady said. "I really oughtn't to. I've had enough to eat already."

"And take this dish of pork ribs away," she went on to say. I'm afraid I might get some into my mouth by mistake."

This provoked a hearty laugh from everyone present.

"My good lady," said Yüeh-niang, "This is counterfeit nonvegetarian fare sent over from the temple just now. Eat as much as you like. It won't do any harm."

"So long as it's really vegetarian fare," said Aunt Yang, "I'll have some of it. My eyes must really be deceiving me. I was sure it was meat."

As they were eating, Lai-hsing's wife, Hui-hsiu, came in.

"You lousy little stinker!" exclaimed Yüeh-niang. "What are you doing here?"

"I've come, like the rest of you, to hear the song singing," said Hui-hsiu.

"The ceremonial gate is closed," said Yüeh-niang. "How did you get in?"

"She was in the kitchen banking the fire," said Hsiao-yü.

"No wonder you're in such a state," exclaimed Yüeh-niang.

"Your nose is dingy,
Your mouth is sooty.

What would an:

Inveterate mischief-maker,[101]

like you want to listen to any scriptures for?”

Thereupon, the group of maidservants and womenfolk gathered around the two nuns as they consumed the assorted delicacies, after which the tea things were cleared away, and the lectern for the scripture recitation was wiped clean. Yüeh-niang trimmed the wicks of the lamps and candles anew and lit some incense, while the two nuns struck up their hand chimes and proceeded with the recitation in a loud voice.

They told how Householder Chang devoted himself to religious practice in the Huang-mei Temple; by day:

Kneeling upright to listen to the scriptures;

and, by night:

Engaging in meditation in the lotus position.[102]

How the Fourth Ch’an Patriarch[103] recognized that:

This was no ordinary person,

but, surely:

A true monk born into this world.

How he enquired as to the location of his native place, and what his name might be. To which the householder responded by relating the preceding events, “Your disciple has abandoned his family property, his wives, and children; sincerely desiring to escape samsara by leaving his home.” How the fourth patriarch accepted him as a disciple under his tutelage, instructing him to plant trees by day, and to pound rice by night. How after six years his regimen of austerities was complete, startling the celestial deva and protector of the Dharma, Wei-t’o, and awakening the attention of the Fourth Patriarch, who instructed him to seek a place to:

Achieve security and fulfill his destiny.[104]

How he bestowed upon him three treasures, a hooded cloak, a rain cape, and a crooked date-wood staff, and sent him south to the banks of the Turbid River[105] in order to:

Enter the womb and take an abode,[106]

thereby securing a new habitation for himself. “After three hundred sixty days:

The fruit of your practice will be complete.

You are now well advanced in years, and your habitation is too dilapidated to permit you to transmit the true wonderful Dharma, or accomplish the salvation of the multitude of living beings.”

The recitation continued to the point where the Virgin Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold was washing clothes by the bank of the Turbid River with her sister-in-law, when she encountered a monk who asked her if she could lend him a habitation. Though she ought not to have, she responded to him, whereupon the old man jumped into the river.

At this point, P’an Chin-lien, who was drowsy with boredom, went off to her room to sleep. In a little while, Hsiu-ch’un came from Li P’ing-erh’s quarters to say that Kuan-ko was awake, and she too left, leaving only Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, Old Mrs. P’an, Sun Hsüeh-o, Aunt Yang, and Wu K’ai’s wife, who elected to remain.

They heard how a large fresh peach came floating along in the river, and how the virgin, though she ought not to have, ate. it, returned home, and, finding herself pregnant:

Bore the fetus in her womb for ten months.[107]

Nun Wang then sang a song to the tune “Playful Children”:

The numinous soul’s true nature[108]
enters into her womb.
Who is there who is cognizant
of these tidings?
No one grasps the meaning of the
coming from the west.[109]
With no more than a squeak[110]
she bears a child,
Who, acknowledging his mother,
wears the iron-visage,
That, alone, enables him to see
the glory of paradise.

From the summit of Mount K'un-lun
he makes chiliocosms spin;
Venerable Amitābha, who allocates
the four directions.[111]

The recitation continued:

The Virgin Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold came into her sister-in-law's room, and said, "It's all because the two of us went to wash our clothes by the bank of the Turbid River that I encountered that old man who asked me if I would lend him a habitation. When he jumped into the river that way, he startled me so that my heart was in a state of trepidation. Then I ate an immortal peach. And now I suffer from a feeling of congestion, and am greatly disturbed. The state of my belly indicates that I have become pregnant." Truly:

For ten months, within her belly,
the mother bore the fetus;
Tears wet the cheeks of the Virgin Worth
a Thousand Pieces of Gold.

Gatha in decasyllabic verse:

The Virgin said, "In my boudoir,
I have become pregnant.
Ruefully I must, swallow my anger,
and keep my own counsel."
In one month, the fetus is,
just like the dew.
In two months, the fetus is,
still without form.
In three months, the fetus is,
like a blood clot.
In four months, the fetus has,
just formed its joints.

In five months, the fetus is,
sexually defined.
In six months, the fetus has,
all six sense organs.
In seven months, the fetus has,
all seven apertures.
In eight months, the fetus has,
the form of a human.
In nine months, the fetus is,
nearly complete.
In ten months, the fetus is
ready to be born.

To an unnamed tune:

The Fifth Patriarch enters the womb[112]
in his mother's belly,
In order to save the multitude of living beings.
The men and women of this sahā world[113]
are loath to repent.
The Ancient Buddha descends to this world
transformed into a mortal body.
Borrowing a womb and emerging from his integument,
In the future he will save his mother, conveying
her to the celestial palace.
The Fifth Patriarch with his Buddha nature,
Enters the womb inside his mother's belly.
Residing there temporarily for ten months,
He becomes a mortal to save living beings.

When the recitation had continued to this point, Yüeh-niang noticed that Hsi-men Ta-chieh had gone off to bed, that her sister-in-law, Wu K'ai's wife, was sprawled out asleep on the bed in the inner room, that Aunt Yang also was yawning, and that the two wax candles on the table had burnt themselves out.

"What time has it gotten to be?" she asked Hsiao-yü.

“It’s already the fourth watch,” said Hsiao-yü. “The cock has crowed.”

Only then did Yüeh-niang tell the two nuns to put their sacred texts away. Aunt Yang went off to sleep in Meng Yü-lou’s quarters, and Big Sister Yü spent the night in Sun Hsüeh-o’s quarters in the rear compound, leaving only the two nuns. Yüeh-niang arranged for the abbess to share a bed with Li Chiao-erh, and for Nun Wang to join her in sleeping on the k’ang in the master suite. The two of them waited for Hsiao-yü to heat up a cup of tea before going to bed. Wu K’ai’s wife was sleeping on the bed in the inner room, together with Yü-hsiao.

Yüeh-niang took the occasion to ask Nun Wang, “Later on, when the Fifth Patriarch grows up, how does he reap the true fruit?”

“The girl’s father and mother,” said Nun Wang, “on seeing that she was pregnant, told her elder brother, Chu Hu, to drive their daughter, the Virgin Worth a Thousand Pieces of Gold, out of the house, with the intent of killing her. Fortunately, her second brother, Chu Lung, had a benevolent heart, and let her escape with her life. She found her way under a weeping willow tree, where she tried to hang herself, which attracted the attention of the god Li Chin-hsing of the Great White Planet Venus, who taught her how to:

Seek after tea and beg for rice,
Accept one’s lot and live one’s days.[114]

Before she knew it:

The ten months of her pregnancy were fulfilled,[115]

and she came upon a temple in the Village of the Immortals, where she gave birth to the Fifth Patriarch.

Purple mist and red light,[116]

filled the hall of the temple. The Virgin, on seeing that no sooner was her child born than he:

Folded his legs in the lotus position,

was fearful at heart, realizing that this was:

Something out of the ordinary.[117]

Later, she made her way to T'ien-hsi village, where she was asleep on the threshing floor of a householder named Wang, when a fire broke out. When she was apprehended and brought to see the householder, he was so struck by her beauty that he offered to keep her as a concubine, at which both mother and son bowed down to him, which had the immediate effect of causing the householder and his wife to faint dead away.[118] The household retainers and the gardener seized the mother and son, but when the householder later recovered consciousness, he said, 'I imagine they are innocent people,' and chose to keep them in his home. Only after he had been nurtured there for six years did the Fifth Patriarch start to talk, on which, without asking his mother's consent, he went straight to a hollow tree on the bank of the Turbid River, recovered his three treasures, and headed straight for the Huang-mei Temple, in order to hear the Fourth Patriarch expound the Dharma, as a result of which he reaped the true fruit. Later he also accomplished the salvation of his mother, so that she was reborn in Heaven."

When Yüeh-niang heard this, she became an even firmer believer in the Buddhist Dharma. There is a poem that testifies to this:

Hearing the Dharma and heeding the scriptures,
she is afraid of death;
The red lotus-blossom tongue of the preacher
emits rays of light.[119]
Who is responsible for leaving us the empty words
of Ch'an Buddhism;
Only to provide nuns and bonzes with an excuse
to beg their bread?

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Chapter 40

HOLDING HER BOY IN HER ARMS LI P'ING-ERH CURRIES FAVOR; DRESSING UP AS A MAIDSERVANT CHIN-LIEN COURTS AFFECTION

Good works must be done because you want to;
Without the intent they accomplish nothing.
Whatever merit accrues to good works you do;
Cannot be shared by anyone except yourself.
Though sacred texts pile up like mountains;
Without karmic affinity you won't read them.
Money and goods heaped higher than the walls;
When danger comes cannot be taken with you.
The dead to whom you tender devout offerings;
Are quite incapable of rising up to eat them.
Though sons and grandsons overflow your halls;
Once you are dead they cannot take your place.[1]

THE STORY GOES that Yüeh-niang slept on the same k'ang with Nun Wang that night.

"Why is it," Nun Wang took the occasion to ask, "that you haven't thus far shown any indication of a happy event?"

"Now that you bring up the subject of a happy event," said Yüeh-niang, "in the eighth month last year, because we had bought the house of Mr. Ch'iao across the street, for no good reason, we all went over to take a look at it. While I was climbing the stairs over

there, my foot slipped, and the wrench I suffered resulted in the miscarriage of a fetus I had been carrying for six or seven months. From that time until now, there haven't been any indications of another child."

"My dear lady," said Nun Wang, "in six or seven months it would already have assumed recognizable shape."

"In the middle of the night," said Yüeh-niang, "I evacuated the fetus into the commode, and when the maidservant and I examined it, it turned out to be a boy."

"My dear lady," said Nun Wang, "what a pity. How did you manage to wrench yourself, or was it just that the embryo was not properly seated in the womb?"

"All I was doing," said Yüeh-niang, "was climbing their stairs, which were narrow and steep, when, somehow or other, one of my feet slipped out from under me. Fortunately, Sister Meng the Third caught hold of me with one hand. Otherwise, I would have fallen all the way down."

"If you were to bear a son," said Nun Wang, "it would do you more good than it would anyone else. Just look at the case of the Sixth Lady in the front compound. She had hardly crossed the threshold any time at all when she gave birth to a son, and now she is treated with such favor."

"Whether any of us bear children or not is up to Heaven," said Yüeh-niang. "That's all there is to it."

"It doesn't matter," said Nun Wang. "A colleague of mine, Reverend Hsüeh, is adept at producing efficacious spells and potions. Year before last there was the case of the wife of Dr. Ch'en, who had reached middle age without any children, having suffered from a series of miscarriages that prevented her from carrying her pregnancies to term. But after taking a fertility potion provided by Reverend Hsüeh, she has given birth to a real armful of handsome baby boy, and the whole household is as happy as can be. The only thing is that the formula requires an ingredient that is hard to obtain."

"What ingredient is that?" asked Yüeh-niang.

“It requires the afterbirth of a firstborn child,” said Nun Wang. “It must be washed in wine, burnt to ashes, and mixed with the potion. Then, selecting a *jen-tzu* day:[2]

Unbeknownst to humans,
Unperceived by ghosts,[3]

you must take it with some rice wine on an empty stomach. If you calculate the date correctly, you will be sure to conceive within the month.”

“Is this person a monk or a nun,” asked Yüeh-niang, “and where does the reverend reside?”

“She’s a nun like myself,” said Nun Wang, “and she’s more than fifty years old. Originally she lived in the Ksitigarbha Nunnery, but recently she has moved to the Lotus Blossom Nunnery in the southern quarter, where she is currently the abbess. She is known for her exemplary conduct, and for her knowledge of any number of scriptures. In addition, she can explicate the *Chin-kang k’o-i*, or *Liturgical Exposition of the Diamond Sutra*, as well as every kind of ‘precious scroll’ relating tales of karmic cause and effect. She can go on for a month without exhausting her repertoire, and constantly frequents prominent households where they ask her to stay for ten days or a fortnight before letting her go.”

“Why don’t you ask her to come here for a visit sometime soon,” said Yüeh-niang.

I’ll take care of it,” said Nun Wang, “at the same time that I solicit the potion that I spoke of, on your behalf. But that one ingredient is hard to obtain, and there’s no place to look for it around here. Unless, thus and so, you were to take advantage of the occasion by digging up the afterbirth of that child from the front compound and using it for the purpose.”[4]

“How could I bear to:

Harm someone else,
To benefit myself?”[5]

said Yüeh-niang. I’ll give you some silver so you can seek one elsewhere at your leisure.”

“This is something that one can only obtain from a midwife,” said Nun Wang. “If I succeed in preparing this potion for you, and you take it in the prescribed manner, I guarantee that you will conceive a child. If you should be fortunate enough in the future to bear him another son, no matter how many rivals you may have:

Even ten twinkling stars,
Are no match for the moon.”

“Don’t tell anyone what you’re about,” Yüeh-niang admonished her.

“My dear lady,” said Nun Wang, “I’m not so foolish as to say anything about it.”

After they had talked for a while, they each fell asleep. Of the events of that evening there is no more to tell.

The next day, Hsi-men Ch’ing came home from the temple. Yüeh-niang had just gotten up and was combing her hair. After Yü-hsiao had taken his outer garments, he sat down.

“Last night,” Yüeh-niang took the occasion to say, “Sister Six was waiting up for you to help celebrate her birthday. Why didn’t you come home?”

Hsi-men Ch’ing told her all about how the *chiao* ceremony was not over, how their kinsman Abbot Wu had gone to such trouble to lay on an elaborate feast that evening, how his brother-in-law, Wu K’ai, had left early, but how the abbot had kept him, along with Brother Hua the Elder, Brother Ying the Second, and Hsieh Hsi-ta, to be entertained by the playing and singing of the two boy actors.

“We continued drinking for half the night. This morning, I was the first to leave and come into the city. Brother Ying the Second and the other two are still at it. Yesterday our kinsman Abbot Wu really put himself out and spent a great deal of money.”

Yü-hsiao brought him a cup of tea, and after drinking it, instead of going to the yamen, he went to his studio in the front compound, sprawled out on the bed there, and went to sleep.

Sometime later, after having combed their hair, P’an Chin-lien and Li P’ing-erh, the latter holding her baby in her arms, made their way to the master suite to join Yüeh-niang in a cup of tea.

“Father has been back for some time,” Yüeh-niang said to Li P’ing-erh. “He’s gone to the front compound. I wanted him to have something to eat with his tea, but he wouldn’t take anything. The maidservants have prepared a meal for him. Why don’t you dress your little Taoist priest in his vestments and take him up front to show to his father.”

“I’ll go too,” said Chin-lien. “Let me put the vestments on the Taoist priest for you.”

Thereupon, she fitted the gold lamé Taoist cap onto his head, dressed him in his Taoist robe, hung the amulet on its cord around his neck, and pulled his tiny shoes and socks on for him.

Chin-lien was going to take the baby herself, but Yüeh-niang said, “You’d better let his mother carry him. Especially since that honey yellow drawnwork skirt of yours won’t take dirt. If it should be soiled however slightly, it will be ruined.”

Thereupon, Li P’ing-erh carried Kuan-ko in her arms, with P’an Chin-lien trailing behind her, as they made their way to Hsi-men Ch’ing’s studio on the western side of the front courtyard. When Shu-t’ung saw the two women lifting aside the portiere to come in, he promptly got out of the way.

When Chin-lien saw that Hsi-men Ch’ing was lying on the k’ang frame with his face to the wall, she pointed to the child and said, “What a slugabed you are, you old beggar! The little Taoist priest has come in person to summon you. A meal has already been laid out in the First Lady’s room, ready for you to eat, but you refuse to get up promptly and continue to play possum.”

Now Hsi-men Ch’ing was a person who had been drinking all night. No sooner did his head hit the pillow than he became oblivious to:

Heaven above and earth below,[6]

and was soon:

Snoring thunderously.

Chin-lien and Li P’ing-erh sat down, one on each side of the bed, and placed the child right in front of his face. How could anyone have withstood such pestering? In no time at all they managed to

awaken Hsi-men Ch'ing, who opened his eyes to see what was going on and observed Kuan-ko right in front of his face, wearing the gold lamé Taoist cap on his head, dressed in the tiny Taoist robe, with the amulet on its cord around his neck. He was so delighted:

His eyebrows arched and his eyes lighted up,[7]

as he hastily picked him up, sat him on his lap, and gave him a kiss.

"What a clean mouth to kiss a baby with!" exclaimed Chin-lien. "Little Taoist priest, Wu Ying-yüan, you ought to throw up in his face. Tell us, where were you yesterday:

Driving a water buffalo to plow the land,[8]

that you should be so exhausted today as to insist on going to sleep in broad daylight? Yesterday you kept your Fifth Lady waiting for you all day. You've got some nerve not to have come home to kowtow to your Fifth Lady on her birthday."



Holding Her Boy in Her Arms Li P'ing-erh Curries Favor

"Yesterday the *chiao* rites went on rather late," said Hsi-men Ch'ing, "and in the evening there was the ceremony of dismissing the generals. In addition, the abbot had prepared a banquet, and we ended up drinking all night long. Today, late as it is, I'm trying to catch a nap while I can, because I still have to go to Provincial Graduate Shang's place to attend a party."

"Why don't you skip it?" said Chin-lien.

“His household sent an invitation yesterday,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “If I don’t show up, they’ll be sure to take offense.”

“If you go,” said Chin-lien, “come home a bit earlier tonight. I’ll be waiting for you.”

“The First Lady has had a meal laid out for you,” said Li P’ing-erh, “and prepared some broth with marinated bamboo shoots. She invites you to come and have something to eat.”

“I don’t feel particularly like eating anything,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “but I’ll go and have some broth.”

Thereupon, he stood up and went off to the rear compound.

When P’an Chin-lien saw that he was gone, she plumped her posterior down in the middle of the bed, rested her feet on the rim of the recessed brazier below, and said, “So this is a bed frame with a k’ang underneath it.”

Reaching out her hand to feel the bedding, she said, “The k’ang has certainly been heated until its boiling hot.”

Noticing that on a table to one side there was a warmer, with a cover of brass wire, used for heating ink stones, she casually picked it up in one hand and said, “Sister Li, the ivory box on the incense stand over there contains pellets of sweet-smelling incense. Hand it to me, will you.”

On the one hand, she opened the box and put some pellets into the warmer, while, on the other hand, she inserted it into her crotch and wrapped her skirt tightly about it, so that it would warm her body and fumigate her clothes at the same time.

After they had sat there for a while, Li P’ing-erh said, “Let’s go back inside. I imagine Father has finished his meal and will be coming out again before long.”

“What if he does?” said Chin-lien. “Are you afraid of him?”

Thereupon, the two of them, carrying Kuan-ko with them, went back to the rear compound.

After some time, when Hsi-men Ch’ing had finished eating, he instructed an orderly to prepare his horse and set off, sometime after noon, to attend the party at the home of Provincial Graduate Shang. Old Mrs. P’an had already departed before he did.

To resume our story, that night, when Nun Wang was about to return home, Yüeh-niang surreptitiously gave her a tael of silver and said to her, “Don’t tell the abbess anything about it, but, whatever you do, contrive to go see Nun Hsüeh and bring a dose of that potion for me.”

Nun Wang accepted the silver and said to Yüeh-niang, “After I leave now, I won’t be able to come back before the sixteenth, but I’ll endeavor to locate that ingredient for you.”

“That’s fine,” said Yüeh-niang. “If you manage this affair successfully for me, I’ll provide you with another expression of my gratitude.”

Thereupon, the nun bade her farewell and departed.

Gentle reader take note: Generally speaking, the heads of prominent households should not patronize monks, or nuns, or go-betweens of this sort. In your:

Vast courtyards and secluded mansions,

they establish intimacy with the womenfolk on the pretext of preaching about Heaven and Hell:

Expounding scriptures and explicating texts;

while, behind your back, they:

Name articles and cite clauses,[9]
On passion’s heats and chills.

There is no telling what they will do. In nine cases out of ten, you will end up suffering calamity at their hands. There is a poem that testifies to this:

Black-robed Buddhist nuns are the most
unspeakable of creatures;
In vast courtyards and secluded mansions
they deceive beauties.
If persons of this ilk were really capable
of attaining Buddhahood;[10]
The Western Paradise would remain forever
a realm immersed in murk.[11]

To resume our story, that evening when Chin-lien was getting ready to go to Yüeh-niang's room in order to visit with the rest of the company, she approached the mirror stand, took off the fret enclosing her chignon, and did up her hair in two curled knots on either side of her head. She then made up her face until it was snow white, painted her lips bright red, put on a pair of gold lantern earrings, applied three beauty patches, adorned herself with a purple gold lamé headband, and donned an outfit consisting of a jacket of scarlet brocade over a blue satin skirt. The idea was to present herself in the guise of a maidservant in order to have some fun with Yüeh-niang and the others.

When she asked Li P'ing-erh over to take a look, she:

Rocked backward and forward,

with laughter, saying, "Sister, you're the spitting image of a maidservant. Let me go back ahead of you. I've got a red cotton kerchief in my room I can put over your head to serve as a veil. I'll give them a scare by announcing that Father has found himself another maidservant, and they'll be sure to fall for it."



Dressing Up as a Maidservant Chin-lien Courts Affection

As they set off for the rear compound, with Ch'un-mei carrying a lantern ahead of them, they ran into Ch'en Ching-chi, who said with a laugh, "I wonder who this can be? It can only be the Fifth Lady up to some trick or other."

"Son-in-law," exclaimed Li P'ing-erh, "come over here and let me explain. You go in first, and when you see them, do:

Thus and thus, and
So and so."

“I’ll know what to do,” said Ching-chi. “Leave it to me.”

Thereupon, he proceeded into the master suite, where everyone was sitting on the k’ang, drinking tea.

“Mother,” said Ching-chi, “take a look at this. Father, for no good reason, has engaged the services of Auntie Hsüeh to buy a twenty-four-year-old girl who knows how to play and sing from another household. She’s just been delivered to our door by sedan chair.”

“Really?” said Yüeh-niang. “Why didn’t Auntie Hsüeh come and tell me about it beforehand?”

“She was afraid you’d give her a hard time,” said Ching-chi, “so, no sooner did the sedan chair arrive than she took off, leaving the servants to bring her inside.”

Yüeh-niang’s sister-in-law, the wife of Wu K’ai, didn’t say anything, but Aunt Yang said, “His Honor has all of you ladies at his disposal already. What does he need another one for?”

“My dear lady,” said Yüeh-niang, “how can you stop him? If he’s got the money to do it, he can buy a hundred and it wouldn’t be too many for him. We’re like:

Women serving in the army:
Merely taking up space,

in these rooms here, that’s all.”

“Let me go take a look,” said Yü-hsiao.

What should she see coming forward under the moonlight but a figure, wearing a veil over her head and dressed in red clothing, while Ch’un-mei, who had originally been carrying the lantern, had turned it over to the page boy Lai-an and was following in her wake, along with Li P’ing-erh. The situation created such a stir that Meng Yü-lou and Li Chiao-erh also came out to survey the scene.

In due course, they came into the room, where Yü-hsiao led her up to Yüeh-niang’s side and said, “This is your mistress. Aren’t you going to kowtow to her?”

So saying, she lifted the veil off her head, and Chin-lien proceeded to kowtow:

Just as though inserting a taper in its holder,

but couldn't help breaking into a titter of laughter as she did so.

"Some maidservant you are!" said Yü-lou. "First you forget to kowtow to your mistress, and then you break out laughing."

Yüeh-niang also laughed, saying, "This Sister Six is such an inveterate prankster that she managed to fool all of us."

"Elder Sister," said Yü-lou, "I was not deceived."

"Sister," said Aunt Yang, "how did you manage to see through it so as not to be deceived?"

"When Sister Six has kowtowed in the past," explained Yü-lou, "she has always done it that way; first touching her forehead to the floor, and then getting up and retreating two steps before making her bow."

"It took you to see through it," said Aunt Yang. "As for me, I would have fallen for it."

"I fell for it too," said Li Chiao-erh. "Just now, if she hadn't taken off her veil and then started to laugh, I wouldn't have recognized her."

As they were speaking, whom should they see but Ch'in-t'ung, who came in carrying Hsi-men Ch'ing's felt bag and reported, "Father has come home."

"You go stay out of sight in the parlor," Yü-lou said to Chin-lien. "When Father comes in, we'll have some fun with him."

It was not long before Hsi-men Ch'ing came in. Aunt Yang and Wu K'ai's wife had already gone elsewhere in anticipation of his coming. When he entered the room, he sat down on a chair.

Yüeh-niang, who was situated to one side, had nothing to say, but Yü-lou said to him, "Today Auntie Hsüeh brought a maidservant in her twenties from someone else's household over here by sedan chair, saying that you had told her to deliver her here because you wanted her. Old as you are, and with an official career in hand, it seems you remain as insatiable as ever."

"Since when did I tell her to buy any maidservant for me?" laughed Hsi-men Ch'ing. "How could you believe that old whore? She was pulling your leg."

“Just ask Elder Sister,” said Yü-lou, “if it isn’t so. The maidservant in question is right here. I’m not fooling. If you don’t believe me, I’ll call her out for you to see for yourself.”

Thereupon, she told Yü-hsiao, “Go drag that new maidservant in here to meet her master.”

Yü-hsiao put her hand over her mouth and laughed, scarcely daring to do as she was told.

After venturing into the other room, she came back, saying, “She refuses to come.”

“Let me go drag her in here,” said Yü-lou. ‘What an impudent slave!

Before being able to so much as shake her head,

she’s defying her master. She’s the sort who will never take instruction from anybody.”

After she had proceeded into the parlor, the rest of them heard a voice saying, “You crazy good-for-nothing! I’d just be wasting my breath on you! I’m not going in. All you seem to be able to do is drag me around. You’re dragging me so fast:

My limbs can hardly touch the ground.”

“A fine slave you are!” laughed Yü-lou. “Whoever taught you to be so unmannerly as to refuse to come in and kowtow to your master?”

And with that she dragged her into the other room. When Hsi-men Ch’ing opened his eyes wide and took a good look under the lamp light, he saw that it was P’an Chin-lien with her hair done up in two curled knots so as to look like a maidservant, which made him:

Laugh until the slits of his eyes disappeared.[12]

Chin-lien sat down on a chair next to him, and Yü-lou said, “What an impudent maidservant! For someone who’s:

Newly come and just arrived,[13]

how can you be so:

Discourteous and ill-bred,[14]

as to sit down, as cool as you please, in front of your master, and splash muck on him to boot?"

Yüeh-niang laughed and said, "Take the occasion of your master's return home to kowtow to him."

Chin-lien made no move to comply but went into Yüeh-niang's inner room, took the pins out of her hair, put the fret back on her chignon, and came out again.

"What a wanton you are!" exclaimed Yüeh-niang. "Whoever gave you permission to affect a fret on your chignon?"

Everyone laughed at this sally for a while longer.

Yüeh-niang then addressed herself to Hsi-men Ch'ing, saying, "Today our kinsman Ch'iao Hung's family sent Ch'iao Tung over with six invitations, inviting us to a lantern-viewing party. Tomorrow we ought to send them some gifts in return."

She told Yü-hsiao to show the invitation card to Hsi-men Ch'ing, who saw that the text read as follows:

> On the twelfth instant, our humble household has prepared a meager potation. If you deign to mount your elegant equipage and condescend to attend, our gratitude for your favor will know no bounds.
>
> The above is addressed to the dressing table of the venerable consort of our eminent kinsman of great virtue and renown, Hsi-men Ch'ing.
>
> Respectfully indited with straightened skirts by the lady, née Cheng, of your humble kinsman of the Ch'iao family.

When Hsi-men Ch'ing had finished perusing the invitation, he said, "Tomorrow morning, tell Lai-hsing to buy four appropriate delicacies and a jug of southern wine to send over to them. That ought to suffice. At the same time, we should send out invitations of our own for the fourteenth. We can invite Ch'iao Hung's wife, Commandant Chou Hsiu's wife, Military Director-in-chief Ching Chung's wife, His Honor Hsia Yen-ling's wife, and our kinsman Chang Kuan's wife. Our sister-in-law, Wu K'ai's wife, will not have to return home in the interim. We'll get Pen the Fourth to hire a fireworks specialist to make several racks of fireworks for us, and engage the troupe of actors maintained by Wang the Second, the distaff relative of the imperial family, to put on a performance of

The Romance of the Western Chamber. While you're at home enjoying the lanterns and drinking wine, I'll invite Brother Ying the Second and Hsieh Hsi-ta to join me for a drink on the second floor of the house on Lion Street."

After he had finished speaking, it was not long before a table was set up and wine was served. P'an Chin-lien offered him a cup of wine and the other sisters followed suit, as they caroused for a while.

Now Hsi-men Ch'ing had been struck by the vision of Chin-lien disguised as a maidservant, and he observed under the lamplight that she was:

Alluringly dressed and heavily made up.

As a result, before he knew it, he was:

Carried away by lecherous desires,

and winked at her so incessantly, that she had no trouble knowing what was on his mind. Consequently, she continued to drink with the company for a while and then went off to her quarters in the front compound, where she doffed her headgear, did her hair up into a casual chignon in the Hang-chou style, and proceeded to:

Retouch her powdered face, and
Rerouge her ruby lips.

It so happens that she had long since set out a table for a drinking party, complete with fancy fruit and vegetable delicacies, in the expectation that Hsi-men Ch'ing would come to her room, so she could offer him a cup of wine.

Before long, Hsi-men Ch'ing actually showed up. When he saw that her hair was still done up in a cloud-shaped chignon, his heart was filled with delight. He embraced her, and the two of them sat down on the same chair together and proceeded to laugh and talk with each other. It did not take long for Ch'un-mei to serve the wine and delicacies, and the woman once again offered him a cup of wine.

"Little oily mouth!" said Hsi-men Ch'ing. "You already offered me one earlier, and now you're going to the trouble all over again."

“That drink amidst a crowd of people doesn’t count,” laughed Chin-lien. “This one represents my personal undertaking to offer you a cup of wine on my own behalf. Year after year I have put you to considerable expense. I hope you don’t regret it.”

This speech caused Hsi-men Ch’ing to:

Laugh until the slits of his eyes disappeared,

and he promptly pulled her onto his lap and sat her on his knee, while Ch’un-mei poured the wine and Ch’iu-chü served the dishes.

“Let me ask you,” said Chin-lien. “On the twelfth, did the Ch’iao family ask all of us to go, or only the First Lady?”

“Since they sent invitations to all of you,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “why shouldn’t you go? When the day comes, I’ll have the wet nurse take the child along, so he won’t cry after his mother if left at home.”

“The First Lady and the others all have appropriate clothes to wear,” said Chin-lien. “Old fogy that I am, all I’ve got is that limited number of outdated things. I don’t have anything really worth looking at. *Why* don’t you take some of those newly purchased fabrics from down south and distribute a few pieces of them to the members of your family so they can be made up into something to wear? Are you hoarding them in the expectation that they’ll propagate themselves, or what? That way, when the day comes for us to entertain the wives of all those officials, we’ll be fit to be seen, and not just a laughingstock. I’m always reminding you of this, but you act oblivious to the problem.”

“If that’s the way it is,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing, “tomorrow I’ll call in Tailor Chao to make up some new clothes for all of you.”

“There are only two days left,” said Chin-lien. “If you wait until tomorrow to set the tailor to work, by the time he finishes the job, it will be too late.”

“I’ll tell Tailor Chao to bring some additional helpers along with him,” said Hsi-men Ch’ing. “As long as they can make up a few items for each of you in a hurry, it will suffice. Whatever work is left over, they can do at their leisure, and it won’t be too late.”

“As I’ve urged you before,” said Chin-lien, “whatever you do, see that they make two first-class outfits for me. I’m not to be compared to the others, who all have wardrobes of their own. You haven’t had any formal clothes made especially for me.”

“You lousy little oily mouth!” laughed Hsi-men Ch’ing. “You’ve got to have your finger in every pie.”

The two of them continued to talk and drink together until the first watch before going to bed. The pair of them were like:

Mandarin ducks beneath the quilt;[15]
Phoenix mates within the curtains.[16]
The swallows twittered in the boudoir;
As their cloudy passions intermingled.

It was some time before they were willing to call a halt, as they kept at it for fully half the night.

The next day, when Hsi-men Ch’ing returned from the yamen, he had the chests opened up and took out a bolt of block printed tussore fabric from the Imperial Silk Manufactory in the south. He then dispatched a page boy to call in Tailor Chao to make up full-sleeved robes of figured material for each of his womenfolk: one outfit of brocade, and one of figured fabric for each of them. Only Yüeh-niang was to get two scarlet full-sleeved brocade robes, and four outfits of figured material.

Hsi-men Ch’ing was in the summerhouse when he dispatched Ch’in-t’ung to fetch Tailor Chao. The tailor was at home, eating his dinner. When he heard that he was being summoned to Hsi-men Ch’ing’s residence, he hastily dropped his rice bowl, picked up his scissors and rule, and set forth. A contemporary composed several lines of verse to commemorate the strong points of this tailor:

I’m a tailor whose surname is Chao,
On call to my patrons each month.
Thread and needle I’m never without,
Rule and scissors are stuck in my boot.
Pleats and folds I find time to produce,
Faulty cuts I can fix in a trice.

Who cares if my clothes do not fit,
The lapels and the collars too tight?
Each day I eat meat at three meals,
And insist on two servings of wine.
Fabric samples I sell at my door,
Temple fairs I attend thrice a month.
When I've money my wife's mouth is sleek,
When I've nothing the children all cry.
No matter whose clothes they may be,
In the pawn shop I put them to rest.
Though you pester me for them all day,
I've a ready excuse in my mouth.
If you claim you must have them at once,
I'll put others in pawn in their stead.
If you ask what it is I do best,
I remain once for all on the take.

Before long the tailor arrived, found Hsi-men Ch'ing sitting at the upper end of the room, and made haste to kowtow to him, after which he spread out a strip of felt on the table, took out his scissors and rule, and set to work.

To start off with, he made Yüeh-niang a full-sleeved scarlet jacket of variegated figured brocade, a satin robe emblazoned with a mandarin square that featured an embroidered *ch'i-lin* being worshiped by the other animals, a robe of jet variegated silk with an edging of gold brocade featuring a pattern of phoenix mates traversing flowers inside a gourd-shaped border, an outfit consisting of a full-sleeved jacket of scarlet satin brocade emblazoned with a mandarin square that featured an embroidered *ch'i-lin*, over a wide trailing skirt of kingfisher-blue brocade, and an outfit consisting of an aloeswood-colored jacket of figured silk brocade emblazoned with a mandarin square, over a trailing scarlet skirt sprigged with gold-stemmed and green-leaved flowers.

For the others, Li Chiao-erh, Meng Yü-lou, P'an Chin-lien, and Li P'ing-erh, he made a full-sleeved robe of scarlet variegated satin with a figured pheasant motif, and two outfits of figured tussore

fabric for each of the four of them. For Sun Hsüeh-o he only made the two outfits but did not make a robe.

In no time at all he had cut out the patterns for some thirty articles of clothing. Hsi-men Ch'ing paid him five taels of silver for his services and engaged ten or more other tailors to make up the garments as fast as possible in his own home. But no more of this. Truly:

Golden bells and jade earrings disguise
the sheltered virgin;
Brocaded silks and pearl headgear adorn
the beauteous maiden.

If you want to know the outcome of these events,
Pray consult the story related in the following chapter.

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Appendix

TRANSLATIONS OF SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

1. Song suite in the southern style beginning with the tune "Pomegranate Blossoms," the first line of which is "It was the night of their assignation." See chap. 21, n. 29. It is preserved in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, pp. 4a–4b; *Nan-kung tz'u-chi*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, pp. 38–39; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2067–69; and *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya*, 12:287–89. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Nan-kung tz'u-chi*.

TO THE TUNE "POMEGRANATE BLOSSOMS"

It was the night of their assignation,
Which had been planned for this evening.
People were silent;
The moon was high.
He had been instructed not to
  knock at the gate,
But ever-so-gently to sway the
  flowering branches,
So that their shadows would appear on the silken window,
And she would know that her
  lover had arrived.
What was the need for butterfly messengers
  or bee go-betweens?
The tryst would take place between the
  phoenix lovers.

TO THE SAME TUNE

"Who could have known my fickle lover would
fail me on this fine night?
My bedchamber is silent,
As I endure my solitude.
The shadows of the wind-blown bamboos move
fitfully on the latticework;
With the result that my dreams are interrupted,
my soul is troubled.
I sigh that we spend more time apart than together.
When I gaze back toward the Radiant Terrace of Ch'u,[1]
mountains and barriers intervene.
For want of clouds and rain, my eyebrows have faded,
my fragrance has dissipated.
Unhappily the road to the Blue Bridge is blocked."[2]

TO THE TUNE "FISHERMAN'S PRIDE, WITH A VARIATION"

"Late at night I get up and trim the silver lamp
to look for him,
But my shadow is solitary and my image lone.
Who could have anticipated that the pleasure
of last evening,
And the even greater pleasure expected tonight,
Should end up, after we separated, without
further communication?
All day long it has been preoccupying me.
Perhaps he is drunk and his feelings are
topsy-turvy;
Perhaps he is performing on his zither
for other ears;
Perhaps he has taken up with some other
flower by the wayside;
Perhaps he has what it takes to get started,
but he won't carry through."

TO THE SAME TUNE

“All on his account I am neglecting
my toilet;
Too tired to paint my eyebrows.
All on his account I no longer enjoy
tea or food;
My thoughts are too disturbed.
All on his account my good feelings
have turned to vexation.
All on his account my heart is sore
and I suffer from boredom.
How can I dispel these feelings at separation?
I’ll end up as prematurely gray as P’an Yüeh,
as emaciated as Shen Yüeh.”[3]

TO THE SAME TUNE

“He has suddenly forgotten our vows beneath
the moon and stars.
He has suddenly forgotten our singing and laughter.
He has suddenly forgotten the poems he indited
on my mermaid silk handkerchief.
He has suddenly forgotten the tiny shoe
I gave him as a keepsake.
He has suddenly forgotten the deft needlework
with which I fashioned his spring gown.
He has completely forgotten that we burned incense
together to solemnize our union.
He has suddenly forgotten the peach-red stain
on the fragrant silk handkerchief.”

TO THE SAME TUNE

“As for my lovesickness,
How can I quickly dispel it?
Will the debt created by our intertwining branches
ever be paid?
Truly, the fallen blossom would like to
float with the current,

But the heartless current is too turbulent
to bear it along.
Concluding that this anguish may be something
I am fated to endure,
I secretly cast my lot with coins, but
get no clear answer.
I would appeal to Heaven itself, but
Heaven is too high."

Coda

If she were ever to see him again,
How could she ever forgive him?
Her only regret was that she was not able to
devastate him with a single tirade.
But once they were reunited, they got along
just as well as before.

2. Song suite beginning with the tune "Spring in the Metropolis," the first line of which is "A cold wind has overspread the land." See chap. 21, n. 43. It is preserved in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 2:867–72; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 16, pp. 51b–53b. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*.

TO THE TUNE "SPRING IN THE METROPOLIS" (SOUTHERN STYLE)

A cold wind has overspread the land.
The frost-braving branches of the golden larch
retain their coin-like leaves.
The oranges are green and the tangerines yellow.
The trees on the embankment are bare, but
the maple leaves are red.
The movements of the hands on the jade clepsydra
are faintly audible;
Somewhat enhancing the effect of the new frost
in the frozen night.
It is time to clear the stackyards, bring in the harvest,
Drill the troops, and practice archery.

To the tune "The leaves of the Phoenix Tree" (northern style)

The southward returning geese,
The crows resting at night,
Perch in the trees and alight on the flat strand.
When one surveys the vista it is worthy of a painting.
During Indian summer there are still plants in flower;
Several verdant peach blossoms have been spared.
Travelers halt their steeds to admire the scene.

To the tune "Sheep on the Mountain Slope" (southern style)

In painted chambers beaded portieres have just been lowered.
Wintry hues oppress the distant mountains.
Beside the brazier wine is poured and portions
  of savory meat are divided.
Three passages are played on the drums.
Icy strings stretch over bridges ranged like wild geese.
Golden braziers are replenished, burning incense
  redolent of orchid and musk.
The shivery effect of the cold gradually
  becomes more intense.
"Let us imbibe 'sunset clouds,'
And feast on 'jade peaches' in fabled love nests,
As, everywhere in the capital,
Pipes and voices resound in a myriad houses."

To the tune "Dancers' Ensemble" (southern style)

In several places flute-players in moon-viewing
  kiosks are heard.
Wine is amply decanted, poems are slowly indited.
There is no helping the fact that the chill
  has somewhat increased.
For a time the curtains have been let down half way.
The winter solstice is at hand, after which
  we will welcome the lengthening days.

To the tune "Gold Chrysanthemum's Fragrance" (northern style)

The ashes of reed pith have been blown from
all six yin pitch-pipes.
The sun's shadow has moved across the line
on the sundial.
Like translucent jade, morning frost covers
the turquoise tiles;
Like glistening alabaster, water congeals into
ice crystals.
"Let us raise jade goblets and decant 'sunset clouds.' "

TO THE TUNE "GOURD OF VINEGAR" (NORTHERN STYLE)

The cold-weather plants gradually begin to bud;
The mountain plum is about to burst into bloom.
In frosty courtyards the *p'i-p'a* is plucked
in time to the dance.
The fragrance fades from garden and wood
as the year winds to an end.
In several places monks pause in reading their sacred texts,
To observe that in the distant sky the force of the wind
is blowing the geese out of line.

TO THE TUNE "WEN-CHOU SONG" (SOUTHERN STYLE)

The dark clouds obscuring it,
Blown off by the evening wind,
The image of the moon traversing the void
illuminates the snow.
Its single hue of alabaster is truly bright,
obscuring the open country.
It falls densely on the sing-song houses,
and flutters into monkish abodes.[4]
Wavering before "silver seas,"
its dazzle creates a blur.[5]
In no time at all it has half covered
the whitewashed wall.

TO THE TUNE "INTERLACED JADE BRANCHES" (SOUTHERN STYLE)

As we idly climb to a lofty kiosk,
Moonlight gleams on white jade girdle pendants,
    and shines on white horses.
In the evening the view over the river
    is resplendent;
A solitary rain-caped fisherman returns home,
    worthy of a painting.
The tiles of golden gates and jade structures
    are frozen in white.
Brushing windows and infiltrating blinds, the snow
    continues to flutter down,
An auspicious omen, presaging an era
    of universal peace.

To the tune "The Flower in the Rear Courtyard" (northern style)

The rivers and mountains present an imposing vista.
Psaltery and mandola are called for to celebrate the season.
Superior wine is served within curtains of gold lamé;
Enhanced by clear breezes, phoenix tablet tea is sipped.
Donning crane's-down cloaks we search for plum blossoms,
Emulate Wang Hui-chih's abortive visit to Tai K'uei
    on a snowy night,[6]
And show off our poetic effusions by the bridge at Pa-ling.[7]
The jasper terraces in the bright moonlight resemble,
The Celestial Emperor's abode in the Isles of the Blest.

To the tune "The Jade Girdle" (southern style)

A subtle fragrance suffuses the air;
Taking advantage of the mild weather, the early plum
    has burst into bloom.
Its white beauty is pure and perfect.
Gracing moonlit terraces and breezy kiosks,
It stoops over low fences and thatched cottages.
Its jade bones and icy flesh are
    cleansed of makeup.

Interspersed with bamboo and pine
it inspires poetic fancy.

To the tune "Black Silk Robe" (southern style)

As in the past, its quintessential nature is resplendent.
Its glossy flesh, tinged with powder, adorns
shallow waters and flat strands.
Its sparse branches encage the moon, casting
their shadows aslant.
Last night it bloomed amid the snow
in the nearby village;
But under Lo-fu Mountain in the south,
It lends its presence to the wineshops.
Its aura of purity is truly astonishing;
Its white decor is beauteous and elegant.
Illuminated by moonlight, set off by bamboo,
what more could one ask?

To the tune "The Greenhorn" (northern style)

Beside glowing braziers, the banquet spread,
the banquet spread is just over.
Lifting golden cups, toasts are exchanged,
toasts are exchanged in "sunset clouds."
Snow is swept together and ice broken up
with which to brew fine tea.
Inserted into silver vases, several sprigs of
plum blossoms are displayed.
On the festival of the eighth day of the twelfth month,
The populace celebrates boisterously,
Effigies of Śākyamuni Buddha are bathed,
And public devotions proceed unhindered.
The year is drawing to an end; and once spring arrives,
spring wind and spring light will fill the world,
Just as the sage emperor governs the myriad states,
and ensures peace in the realm.

To the tune "Playing the Old Crone" (southern style)

Welcoming the new spring, we gradually perceive
that the cold is receding.
En route to festive feasts, we ride in perfumed carriages.
Carefully we decant the apotropaic T'u-su wine,
And set off firecrackers on New Year's Eve.
New peachwood talismans are exchanged for the old.
When spring arrives, the wicks in jade lamps
shed their ashes.
Fires are lit, illuminating the frosty tiles;
To the beat of drums the exorcistic *No* rites are performed;
As, troupe by troupe, the dancers put on a noisy show.
Portraits of the demon queller Chung K'uei are hung up.[8]
At midnight New Year's toasts are everywhere exchanged.
Pepper-flavored wine is served and its praises sung.
Rowdy friends disturb their stabled horses;
Rows of torches scatter the roosting crows.[9]

Coda (southern style)

The sage ruler of the Great Ming dynasty
has pacified the realm.
He has brought peace and contentment to
natives and foreigners alike.
Within the four seas all is tranquil
and the populace is happy.

3. Song suite by Ch'en To (fl. early 16th century) beginning with the tune "Powdery Butterflies," the first line of which is "Three Variations on the Plum Blossom." See chap. 22, n. 14. This song suite is performed twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, chapter 22, p. 5a, 1. 10; and vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 9b, 1. 4. It is also mentioned in vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 7a, 11. 9–10. It is preserved in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:383–86; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 6, pp. 97a–98a; *Ch'ün-yin leihsüan*, 4:2300–2303; *Pei-kung tz'u-chi*, 4:650–51; and *Ch'iu-pi yüeh-fu*, vol. 1, pp. 11b–13a. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Pei-kung tz'u-chi*.

To the tune "Powdery Butterflies" (northern style)

"Three Variations on the Plum Blossom"; [10]
In the frontier watchtower the bugle has
finished playing it.
The wheel of the moon shines aslant
on the gauze window.
Supporting her fragrant cheek on her hand,
Her eyes overflow with tears.
Beneath the shaded lamp,
She tosses and sighs.
The words he had whispered in her ear have turned out
to be nothing but empty talk.

To the tune "Grieving for Yen Hui" (southern style)

"My fickle lover is too inconstant.
This playfulness of his is something out of the ordinary.
He went out the door easily enough,
And now he's at the sea's rim or the sky's edge.
He was supposed to return late last year,
But, in no time at all, spring and summer
have passed.
When he left, the frost had already aged
the lotus blossoms,
And now, once again, the water is
chilling the reeds."

To the tune "Pomegranate Blossoms" (northern style)

"I have dissipated the best years of my life
beside the green gauze windows.
For a long time now, I have not bothered
to put on any makeup.
My bowels, which are wrenched nine times a day,
are ever more constricted.
It is nearly enough to kill me;
On top of which I suffer from spectral visitations.

Sometimes I entrust my fate to azure Heaven by
consulting the tortoise oracle;
But I am quite unable to interpret the
conflicting results.
All of a sudden, I happen to pick up a
fragrant silk handkerchief,
Only to find that it is aptly embroidered
with a double-headed flower."

TO THE TUNE "GRIEVING FOR YEN HUI" (SOUTHERN STYLE)

"The slippery villain,
His heart is impossible to fathom.
He is always deceiving people with his clever tongue,
While he floats about restlessly,
Just like willow catkins in the wind.
The more I think about it the clearer it is,
Your lustful daring has ever been
as big as the sky.
You have devoted yourself to pilfering jade
and purloining perfume,[11]
In order to violate the mansions and offices
of the rich and powerful."

TO THE TUNE "FIGHTING QUAILS" (NORTHERN STYLE)

"This hateful separation seems to go on
for year after year;
It is not to be compared to a brief space
or a short time.
Vexation has worn away the twin arcs
of my eyebrows;
And so emaciated my waist that it is
only a handful.
Here I am, yearning for him every morning
and every night,
But when does he ever bother
to remember me?

Unable to mount to the azure firmament
aboard a phoenix,
He has tethered his horse to the willow tree
at some girl's house."

To the tune "Moth Flying into the Lamp" (southern style)

"Hungering for love is like grasping sand;
This lonely suffering is like chewing wax.
Who knows where he is, cuddling up to
some smiling face,
While I'm putting up with all this anxiety
for no good reason?
And there's no way for me to get
any news of him.
In the end the day will come when he
returns home.
I'll enumerate the entire gamut
of his peccadillos,
And take him to task for each
and every one of them."

To the tune "Mounting the Little Tower" (northern style)

"I have always remained completely unblemished,
And he has always known the rules of propriety.
Yet, for no good reason, I have had to suffer
all this desolation;
Put up with all this loneliness;
And endure all this ill treatment.
It is obvious that the bronze-dragon spouts
on the clepsydra have run dry;
The horse-shaped iron chimes on the eaves sound in vain;
The incense in the duck-shaped metal burner is burnt out.
The hardest time to endure is this remnant of
the twelfth month at the end of winter."

To the tune "Moth Flying into the Lamp" (southern style)

The wind soughs wildly, sou-sou,
The snow falls densely, fen-fen,
Ch'i-ch'i, the phoenix pillow is desolate,
Ch'en-ch'en, the mandarin duck curtains
  are porous and thin,
She-she, the brocade coverlet
  lies cold,
Cho-cho, the silver lamp flares
  violently,
Wu-wu, the nomad flute wails
  on the ramparts,
Tung-tung, the last night watch
  is sounded,
Ya-ya, the crows on the trees
  scatter at dawn.

CODA

Once again Cho Wen-chün must elope in
  her perfumed carriage.
Her sole fear, that she has misconstrued
  the zither's message,
And will only join Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju to
  become a topic of scandal.[12]

4. Song suite beginning with the tune "Cries of the Wild Geese in Flight," the first line of which is, "The Red Emperor holds sway, ablaze in the Great Void." See chap. 27, n. 32. It is preserved in *Sung Yüan hsi-wen chi-i*, pp. 116–17; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, p. 552; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:264–65; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 3, pp. 61b–62a. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Sung Yüan hsi-wen chi-i*.

TO THE TUNE "CRIES OF THE WILD GEESE IN FLIGHT"

The Red Emperor holds sway, ablaze
  in the Great Void.

There is not a trace of fragrant
breeze from the south.
Even sucking ice and nibbling snow
would be of no avail.
Though fans are kept in constant motion,
Beads of perspiration hang like pearls,
Serving to enervate jade bones
and icy flesh.
Moving to the verdant hillside,
Boys are ordered to shake the bamboos
to attract a breeze,
And thereby momentarily alleviate
the oppressive heat.

To the same tune with a modified opening

"The long days are exhausting,
Powder becomes damp and perfume sticky.
Though fans move over ice to cool one off,
it is impossible to sleep.
Late at night,
The two of us,
Move where the pure fragrance of the lotus blossoms
is most pervasive,
In the hope that by that time the power of the heat
will have abated.
In waterside pavilions we can join voices to sing
'Golden Threads,'[13]
Submerge red plums and float green melons as we drain
a few cups together."

To the tune "Windblown Sand"

As they lean against the carved balustrade
the sun sets in the west.
While they watch the mandarin ducks playing
amid the ripples,

Before they know it, the evening chill creeps
    into their sleeves.
In the gaps between the duckweed they see the
    moon invade the water,
Sending gilded waves sailing into the clumps
    of blue-green lotus.
With visages illuminated by the evening light,
Showing off their loveliness to best advantage,
They contemplate a double-headed lotus blossom.
Its fragrant heart, unfortunately, is not
    able to speak.
For whom does it wait there in its frozen beauty?

To the same tune

"The incense burner diffuses the scent of aloeswood
    throughout the courtyard.
In such an attractive setting,
The spirits are invigorated,
And the feelings are relaxed.
Sticking jasmine blossoms in our hair,
Reciting newly composed poems,
How many can experience scenes such as this?
What need is there for pillows and mats
    or bedsteads with gauze netting?"

To the tune "A Bundle of Oars"

The clear night is short,
With flagon at hand it is meet to pass the cup.
When days are long,
How is one to combat the cruel heat?
One hopes that on the watchtower,
The bronze clepsydra will slow its pace.
After two or three cups of wine,
What does it matter if one is late getting to sleep?

Coda

"The milky way still turns,
The jade clepsydra drips;
We'd better catch a little rest by the southern window.
Tomorrow night we can come to cool off again
in the same place."

5. Song suite beginning with the tune "A Single Missive," the first line of which is "Everyone fears the days of summer." See chap. 30, n. 36. It is preserved in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 531–32; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:206–207; *Chiu-pien nan chiu-kung p'u*, pp. 76–77; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 4, pp. 68a–68b; and *ts'e* 16, pp. 45b–46b. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*.

TO THE TUNE "A SINGLE MISSIVE"

"Everyone fears the days of summer,
But I love the glory of burning days
and summer heat.
Wherever one looks there are things to celebrate.
Bamboo shoots become stalks, sunflowers burst into bloom;
Clouds soar into strangely shaped peaks by the
thousands and ten thousands;
Pomegranates produce clusters of three or four
red-capped blossoms;
The cicadas are clamorous,
The rain has just stopped,
From the green grass around the pond,
frogs are heard everywhere.
With nothing on our minds,
Who is our equal?
From time to time we glimpse a pair of swallows
darting about the curtains."

CHORUS

"In this cool pavilion, you and I,

Alternately pour out ‘sunset clouds,’
and exchange mutual toasts.”

To the tune “Black Silk Robe”

“In the twinkling of an eye it is the Dragon Boat Festival.
Because of the genial weather, one is not too aware
of the summer heat.
When it is appropriate to sing lustily,
one should sing lustily,
Don’t let the fine days and lovely scenery
go unappreciated.
Having just experienced the joys of the nuptial chamber,
We try tugging together on the gaudy ropes of the swing.
Enjoying calamus wine and festival *tsung-tzu,*[14]
We feast and drink together.
There is no reason one should not choose to pick
the fruit from the branches.”

Chorus

“In this cool pavilion, you and I,
Alternately pour out ‘sunset clouds,’
and exchange mutual toasts.”

To the tune “A Splendid Calabash”

“All of a sudden we perceive the scent
of hidden blossoms.
A fragrant breeze ruffles the lotuses in the pond.
We watch the mandarin ducks sport in the water,
their necks entwined.
Coming this way and going that way,
They startle the frolicking fish into
surfacing in the azure waves.
From the vantage point of a waterside retreat,
We observe the lotus gatherers singing their
lotus-gathering songs.”

CHORUS

"In this cool pavilion, you and I,
Alternately pour out 'sunset clouds,'
  and exchange mutual toasts."

TO THE TUNE "MUSIC CALMS THE SPIRIT"

"In the evening, having bathed,
We enjoy the breeze, gaze at the moon,
  and lightly pluck the *p'i-p'a*.
Beauties can be heard laughing responsively
  behind gauze windows.
From time to time, one can hear their
  whispered endearments.
The word is that it will be a fine night,
Much cooler than the night before.
We might as well enjoy the pleasures of connubial bliss.
Inebriated among the flowers,
The taste of the wine is alluring.
What need is there for punkahs
  with flagon at hand?"

CHORUS

"In this cool pavilion, you and I,
Alternately pour out 'sunset clouds,'
  and exchange mutual toasts."

CODA

"Laughing, we enter the bedstead with gauze netting.
In this breezy compartment and cool chamber,
  let us linger.
Where jade bones and icy flesh are concerned,
  anything goes."

6. Song suite by Lü Chih-an (14th century) beginning with the tune "A Gathering of Worthy Guests," the first line of which is "Alas! This floating life of ours is like a dream." See chap. 31, n. 57. It is

preserved in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1130–32; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 466–67; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 2:914–18; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 14, pp. 26a–27b. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*.

To the tune "A Gathering of Worthy Guests"

"Alas! This floating life of ours
  is like a dream.
The events of the past have already come to naught.
In a snap of the fingers, the red disk
  sinks in the west;
In a trice, dust rises from what was once
  a wide blue sea.
The youngster's glossy black hair
  has turned to gray;
The red-cheeked youth's head is white,
  his eyebrows bushy.
In a turn of the head we will all be ghosts
  under the Pei-mang Mountains.
Merely to mention the subject is enough
  to induce sorrowful reflection.
We might as well let wine soak the sleeves
  of our gowns,
And flowers weigh down the brims
  of our hats."[15]

To the tune "Free and Easy Wandering"

"Without any entanglements,
I might just as well rest
  at my ease.
I can sleep until the sun is three rods high[16]
  without getting up.
I amuse myself with poetry, wine,
  zither, and chess,
And am able to be united with my children
  and my rustic wife.

Wealth and distinction, success and fame,
are external affairs.
I am tired of striving for them and being
driven by others.
I would rather relax and give free rein
to my fancy,
Indulge my natural feelings,
Extend my horizons and unknit my brow."

To the tune "The Leaves of the Phoenix Tree"

"Why strive for fame and fortune?
Why differentiate you from me?
In the twinkling of an eye our old friends
are few and far between.
Gradually our red-cheeked countenances
become altered;
Before we know it white hairs
encroach upon us.
To mention the subject induces sorrowful reflection.
The fact is, we cannot prevent time from flying
like a white horse galloping past a crack."[17]

To the tune "The Flower in the Rear Courtyard"

"Alas! Time passes like a dream.
The fullness of youth flows away like water.
One can only observe the endless affairs of the world,
While draining the finite cups this life affords.
Do not become deluded.
Resolutely reverse course while the current is swift.[18]
By the banks of P'an Stream the fish are lovely as ever.[19]
On Shou-yang Mountain the ferns are full-grown.[20]
The peaks of Mount Hua in the west remain striking.[21]
On the Tung-t'ing Lake the breezes are still gentle."[22]

To the tune "A Pair of Wild Geese"

“It is better to learn the wisdom of returning home
as early as possible,
Where one can enjoy the leisure to study ultimate principles.
There one will not be encumbered by
disgrace or glory.
One can live in honest poverty and avoid controversy,
Distance oneself from the red dust and practice the Tao.”

TO THE TUNE “GOURD OF VINEGAR”

“When spring comes, one listens to the oriole
singing on the branch.
One hears the call of the cuckoo beneath the flowers,
Repeating with every cry the message,
‘why not go home?’
As for the money in your wallet, I urge you
not to begrudge it.
You might as well sober up when drunk, the better
to get drunk once more.
The shadows of the flowers move across the mat
even as you feast.”[23]

TO THE SAME TUNE

“When summer comes, one observes the rippling light
on the surface of the lake.
The fragrant breeze is gentle everywhere,
Flapping one’s lapels and loosening one’s hair,
on the willow-shaded embankment.
A day gained, is a day lived through,
and one day the less.
Why strive for fame or fortune?
In this life, from of old, those who live
to seventy are few.”[24]

TO THE SAME TUNE

“When autumn comes, one watches the chrysanthemum
by the hedge blossom into gold.

One enjoys the watery moon in the distant sky.
Truly, the river reflects the autumn landscape
as wild geese take flight.[25]
It pleases the heart to laugh and talk
while sharing cups of wine.
When able to do so with a soul mate,
One returns home with yellow blossoms
stuck all over one's head."

TO THE SAME TUNE

"When winter comes, alabaster flakes
come swirling down.
Eddies of shredded goosedown start to fly.
Shadows of plum blossoms by the wattled fence
are projected across the window.
In one's humble parlor one fills cup after cup
of wine to the brim.
Once inebriated one can take a nap,
And let the red dust billow back and forth
wherever it will."

CODA

"Do not seek the snail's tentacle of fame;
Do not covet a fly's head worth of profit.
The crane's legs are long, the duck's legs short,[26]
they cannot be equalized.
In the end, who can say who is
in the right?
The best course for me is to conceal myself
amid the vulgar herd,
And let someone else carry the gourd
from now on."

7. Song to the tune "A Sprig of Flowers," the first line of which is "Though I am not one of the eight ministers entitled to wear the purple sash." See chap. 31, n. 58. It is the first song in a long

dramatic suite that is preserved in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1460–65; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 293–96; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 2:1053–60; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 9, pp. 43a–45b. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*.

TO THE TUNE "A SPRIG OF FLOWERS"

"Though I am not one of the eight ministers
entitled to wear the purple sash;
I command the denizens of the six palaces
with their golden hairpins.
When I hear the purple whip crack,
To bring the civil and military ranks to attention,
I observe the raising of the purple curtain
as His Imperial Majesty comes in.
Though I may not be fit material to be
a general or a minister,
I attend the imperial equipage and
enjoy the ruler's regard.
At the behest of the consorts and empress
in the various palaces,
I supervise a lighthearted bevy of
eight hundred beauties,
And command the charming company of
three thousand palace women."

8. Song to the tune "Eight Beats of a Kan-chou Song," the first line of which is "Concealed amid clusters of turquoise hair ornaments." See chap. 32, n. 10. It is the first song in a long dramatic suite that is preserved in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1093–95; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 137–39; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:481–85; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 4, pp. 47b–49a; and *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 3:1895–98. The following translation is based on the text as given in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*.

TO THE TUNE "EIGHT BEATS OF A KAN-CHOU SONG"

Concealed amid clusters of turquoise hair ornaments,

And a hazy nimbus of incense like sunset clouds,
By the wavering glare of red candlelight,
Under moon-shaped rafters and cloudlike beams,
Enclosed within twelve latticework partitions
held up with golden hooks,
In the gilded chamber, standing screens surround
a feast on tortoiseshell mats.
Where fragrant foam floats on the contents of
white jade goblets,
An aura of exhilaration pervades the breast,
As faces are suffused with the air of spring.

9. Song to the tune "The Water Nymphs," the first line of which is "With his tiger-head tally minted out of horse-hoof gold." See chap. 32, n. 16. This song is the second of a set of four anonymous songs to the same tune that are included in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 18, pp. 45a–45b.

TO THE TUNE "THE WATER NYMPHS"

With his tiger-head tally minted out of
horse-hoof gold,
With his duck green, velvet lined,
tortoiseshell armor,
His mutton-fat jade belt plaque with its
lion and barbarian king,
He is fit material to be an imperial general or minister.
May His Excellency and his lady remain true
till their heads are white;
May His Excellency's ancestors be enfeoffed
three generations back;
May His Excellency's fame be broadcast
throughout the four seas;
May His Excellency daily advance up the
golden ladder of success.

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NOTES

CHAPTER 21

1. See *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei*. Volume One: *The Gathering*, trans. David Tod Roy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chap. 5, n. 1.

2. The word "willow" here refers to a courtesan. This is an allusion to a famous literary tale entitled *Liu-shih chuan* (The tale of Ms. Liu [willow]), attributed to Hsü Yao-tso (early 9th century). See *T'ang Sung ch'uan-ch'i chi (An* anthology of literary tales from the T'ang and Sung dynasties), ed. Lu Hsün (Peking: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing she, 1958), pp. 47–50; and *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period*, trans. E. D. Edwards, 2 vols. (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1937–38), 2:170–73.

3. The Jade Well is the name of a pool on the summit of Mount Hua which was alleged to produce magical white lotus blossoms with multitudinous petals, the consumption of which would lead to immortality. Hence the "lotus" of the Jade Well refers to a pure, or chaste, woman, as opposed to the "willow" in the quarter of the previous line. The locus classicus for this expression is a poem by Han Yü (768–824). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih* (Complete poetry of the T'ang), 12 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1960), vol. 5, *chüan* 338, p. 3789, l. 3. On the problematical location of this pond, see Kathlyn Maurean Liscomb, *Learning from Mount Hua: A Chinese Physician's Illustrated Travel Record and Painting Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 45–46 and 52.

4. The ultimate source of this poem, with considerable textual variation, is the fifteenth-century literary language love tale entitled *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* (A pleasing tale of passion). See *Yen-chü pi-chi* (A miscellany for leisured hours), ed. Lin Chin-yang (fl. early 17th century), 3 vols., fac. repr. of Ming ed., in *Ming-Ch'ing shan-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-pien* (Collectanea of rare editions of Ming-Ch'ing fiction, first series) (Taipei: T'ien-i ch'u-pan she, 1985), vol. 2, *chüan* 6, upper register, p. 33a, ll. 6–9. A version of the same poem that is textually closer to that in the *Chin P'ing Mei* occurs in the *Pai-chia kung-an* (A hundred court cases), 1594 ed., fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti-erh chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, second series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1990), vol. 4, *chüan* 6, ch. 56, p. 21a, ll. 7–10.

5. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan* (Chronicle of the feudal states), by Yü Shao-yü (fl. mid-16th century), 8 *chüan* (Chien-yang: San-t'ai kuan, 1606), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti-liu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, sixth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1990), vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 37b, l. 8; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 8, ch. 67, p. 9b, l. 10.

6. The locus classicus for this expression is the *Kuan-tzu*, an eclectic work that purports to represent the thought of the historical Kuan Chung (d. 645 B.C.), although it was not put

into its present form until about 26 B.C. by Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.). See *Kuan-tzu chiao-cheng* (The *Kuan-tzu* collated and corrected), ed. and annot. Tai Wang (1837–73), in *Chu-tzu chi-ch'eng* (A corpus of the philosophers), 8 vols. (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1978), vol. 5, *chüan* 1, ch. 3, p. 8, l. 4. The relevant passage has been translated by W. Allyn Rickett as follows: "When planning for a lifetime, there is nothing better than planting men." See *Guanzi: Political, Economic, and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, trans. W. Allyn Rickett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 96, ll. 24–25. It also occurs in *Hsiang-nang yüan* (The tragedy of the scent bag), a tsa-chü drama by Chu Yu-tun (1379–1439), author's preface dated 1433, in *Sheng-Ming tsa-chü, erh-chi* (Tsa-chü dramas of the glorious Ming dynasty, second collection), comp. Shen T'ai (17th century), fac. repr. of 1641 edition (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-chü ch'u-pan she, 1958), scene 1, p. 6b, l. 4; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i* (The romance of the restoration of the great Sung dynasty), by Hsiung Ta-mu (mid-16th century), 8 *chüan* (Chien-yang: Ch'ing-pai t'ang, 1552), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti san-shih ch'i chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, thirty-seventh series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1991), *chüan 7*, p. 10b, ll. 2–3; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan* (Chronicle of the entire Han dynasty), 12 *chüan* (Chien-yang: K'o-ch'in chai, 1588), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti-wu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, fifth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1990), *chüan 6*, p. 25b, l. 6; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan 7*, ch. 64, p. 28a, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i* (The romance of Eunuch Cheng Ho's expedition to the Western Ocean), by Lo Mao-teng (fl. late 16th century), author's preface dated 1597, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), vol. 1, ch. 36, p. 470, l. 14.

7. The story underlying this couplet occurs in the *Han Fei tzu* (Works of Master Han Fei), by the Legalist philosopher Han Fei (c. 280–233 B.C.). See *Han Fei tzu so-yin* (A concordance to *Han Fei tzu*) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1982), ch. 13, p. 750, ll. 1–6. It is translated by Burton Watson as follows: "Once a man of Ch'u named Mr. Ho, having found a piece of jade matrix in the Ch'u Mountains, took it to court and presented it to King Li. King Li instructed the jeweler to examine it, and the jeweler reported, 'It is only a stone.' The king, supposing that Ho was trying to deceive him, ordered that his left foot be cut off in punishment. In time King Li passed away and King Wu came to the throne, and Ho once more took his matrix and presented it to King Wu. King Wu ordered his jeweler to examine it, and again the jeweler reported, 'It is only a stone.' The king, supposing that Ho was trying to deceive him as well, ordered that his right foot be cut off. Ho, clasping the matrix to his breast, went to the foot of the Ch'u Mountains, where he wept for three days and nights, and when all his tears were cried out, he wept blood in their place. The king, hearing of this, sent someone to question him. 'Many people in the world have had their feet amputated—why do you weep so piteously over it?' the man asked. He replied, 'I do not grieve because my feet have been cut off. I grieve because a precious jewel is dubbed a mere stone, and a man of integrity is called a deceiver. This is why I weep.' The king then ordered the jeweler to cut and polish the matrix, and when he had done so a precious jewel emerged. Accordingly it was named 'The Jade of Mr. Ho.' " See *Han Fei Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), p. 80. Note that in quoting this couplet, Hsi-men Ch'ing identifies himself with a ruler.

8. Variants of this proverbial saying occur in the Ming dynasty ch'uan-ch'i drama entitled *Yü-huan chi* (The story of the jade ring), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 11, p. 38, l. 11; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Pao-chien chi* (The story of the precious sword), by Li K'ai-hsien (1502–68), completed in 1547, in *Shui-hu hsi-ch'ü chi, ti-erh chi*

(Corpus of drama dealing with the *Shui-hu* cycle, second series), ed. Fu Hsi-hua (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1958), scene 47, p. 85, l. 7; and in a set of song lyrics by the same Li K'ai-hsien, the author's preface to which is dated 1544, in *Li K'ai-hsien chi* (The collected works of Li K'ai-hsien), ed. Lu Kung, 3 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), 3:875, l. 6.

9. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua* (Story of the plum in the golden vase), preface dated 1618, 5 vols., fac. repr. (Tokyo: Daian, 1963), vol. 2, ch. 38, p. 11b, l. 2.

10. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in the sixteenth-century novel *Hsi-yu chi* (The journey to the west), 2 vols. (Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan she, 1954), vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 205, l. 15; and in San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i, vol. 1, ch. 42, p. 544, l. 3.

11. Variants of this idiomatic expression recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 5b, l. 7; and vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 13a, ll. 6–7.

12. This line recurs twice in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 8a, l. 8; and vol. 3, ch. 43, p. 5b, l. 7. A truncated variant also occurs in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 14a, l. 2.

13. This four-character expression occurs in the scurrilous mid-sixteenth-century novelette *Ju-i chün chuan* (The tale of Lord As You Like It), Japanese movable type edition, colophon dated 1880, p. 16a, l. 3. There is now an excellent study of this enigmatic work available, including a complete annotated translation of the text. See Charles R. Stone, "The *Ruyijun zhuan* and the Origins of the Chinese Erotic Novel," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1999. The passage in question is translated in ibid., p. 253, l. 3.

14. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Chien-teng yü-hua* (More wick-trimming tales), by Li Ch'ang-ch'i (1376–1452), author's preface dated 1420, in *Chien-teng hsin-hua [wai erh-chung]* (New wick-trimming tales [plus two other works]), ed. and annot. Chou I (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957), *chüan* 5, p. 288, l. 6.

15. A variant of this couplet recurs as the first half of a quatrain in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 13b, l. 3.

16. The locus classicus for this four-character expression is a line in the *Hsüeh fu* (Rhapsody on snow), by Hsieh Hui-lien (407–33). See *Wen-hsüan* (Selections of refined literature), comp. Hsiao T'ung (501–31), 3 vols., fac. repr. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), vol. 1, *chüan* 13, p. 12a, l. 3; and *Chinese Rhyme-Prose: Poems in the Fu Form from the Han and Six Dynasties Periods*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 90, l. 9. It also occurs in a lyric by Liu Yung (cs 1034), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u* (Complete *tz'u* lyrics of the Sung), comp. T'ang Kuei-chang, 5 vols. (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1977), 1:27, upper register, l. 1; in a lyric by Li Chih-i (fl. late 11th-early 12th century), ibid., 1:351, upper register, l. 10; and in *Chien-teng hsin-hua* (New wick-trimming tales), by Ch'ü Yu (1341–1427), in *Chien-teng hsin-hua [wai erh-chung], chüan 2*, p. 52, l. 12.

17. These two lines are from a famous literary tale entitled *Huo Hsiao-yü chuan* (The story of Huo Hsiao-yü), by Chiang Fang (early 9th century), where they occur in reversed order. See *Huo Hsiao-yü chuan*, in *T'ang Sung ch'uan-ch'i chi*, p. 71, l. 9; and Cordell D. K. Yee, trans., "Huo Hsiao-yü," in *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic*, ed. Karl S. Y. Kao (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 213, ll. 3–4. The same two lines also occur in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Tzu-ch'ai chi* (The story of the purple hairpin) by T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550–1616), originally completed in 1587, author's preface written in 1595. See *Tzu-ch'ai chi*, ed. and annot. Hu Shih-ying (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1982), scene 14, p. 56, l. 9.

18. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a quatrain by Wang An-shih (1021–86), *Ch'üan Sung shih* (Complete poetry of the Sung), comp. Fu Hsüan-ts'ung et al., 72 vols. (Peking: Pei-ching ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1991–98), 10:6684, l. 12; a lyric by Ts'ai Shen (1088–1156), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1017, lower register, l. 16; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* (An anthology of Yüan tsa-chü drama), comp. Tsang Mao-hsün (1550–1620), 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), 3:976, l. 17; and *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 4, p. 256, l. 5.

19. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Juan Yüeh (cs 1085), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:642, upper register, l. 5; and one by Tso Yü (cs 1109), ibid., 2:912, lower register, l. 2. It also occurs in *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi* (The romance of the western chamber [with collected commentary and critical annotation]), ed. and annot. Wang Chi-ssu (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1987), play no. 3, scene 2, p. 113, ll. 9–10; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Huai-hsiang chi* (The stolen perfume), by Lu Ts'ai (1497–1537), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed., scene 16, p. 45, l. 2; the novel *Tung-yu chi: shang-tung pa-hsien chuan* (Journey to the east: The story of the eight immortals of the upper realm), comp. Wu Yüan-t'ai (16th century), appendix dated 1596, fac. repr. of Chien-yang ed. published by Yü Hsiang-tou (c. 1550–1637), in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti san-shih chiu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, thirty-ninth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1991), 1:191, ll. 6–7; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 46, p. 591, l. 12.

20. An orthographic variant of this idiomatic expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 27, p. 314, l. 4.

21. This was a type of spherical openwork incense burner enclosing a censer mounted on gimbals, or the so-called Cardan suspension, so that the censer itself would remain level no matter how the sphere was rotated. This device was invented in China as early as the Han dynasty. For a detailed discussion, including illustrations and citations of the relevant sources, see Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 4, part 2, *Mechanical Engineering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 228–36. For a sixteenth-century description of such a device, see *Liu-ch'ing jih-cha* (Daily jottings worthy of preservation), by T'ien I-heng (1524-c. 1574), preface dated 1572, fac. repr. of 1609 ed. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), *chüan 22*, pp. 12b–13a.

22. A variant of this expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 50, p. 6b, l. 6.

23. A variant of the idiom "to smash someone's honey jar" recurs in ibid., vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 12b, l. 1.

24. This idiom recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 18a, l. 6.

25. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 15, n. 14.

26. This is an example of the type of Chinese wordplay called *hsieh-hou yü*. See ibid., chap. 5, n. 28. Variants occur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 49, p. 6b, ll. 10–11; and vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 5a, l. 4.

27. According to Chinese folk belief, individuals, like animals, have only a predetermined allotment of sustenance on which to depend. If one accepts honors to which one is not entitled, one forfeits a corresponding share of one's future sustenance. The same idiom occurs in the *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan* (Variorum edition of the *Outlaws of the Marsh*), ed. Cheng Chen-to et al., 4 vols. (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1958), vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 449, l. 6; and ch. 30, p. 463, l. 2.

28. This is a complex play on words. The character for the common surname Lin (the semantic meaning of which is "forest") is written by repeating the component *mu* (tree or

wood). If these components are read separately they form the expression *mumu* (to be stiff or wooden). An example of this usage occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 65, l. 2. The surname Lin also has a homophone (written the same way with the addition of a mouth radical on the left) the meaning of which is "doltish" or "stupid." See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 4, p. 133, l. 6.

29. The lyrics to this anonymous song suite may be found in the following anthologies: *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u* ([Newly compiled] Anthology of song lyrics in the nine southern modes), fac. repr. of Wan-li (1572–1620) ed. (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1961), *chüan* 3, pp. 4a-4b; *Nan-kung tz'u-chi* (Anthology of southern-style song lyrics), comp. Ch'en So-wen (d. c. 1604), in *Nan-pei kung t'zu-chi* (Anthology of southern- and northern-style song lyrics), comp. Ch'en So-wen, ed. Chao Ching-shen, 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), vol. 1, *chüan* 1, pp. 38–39; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan* (An anthology of songs categorized by musical type), comp. Hu Wen-huan (fl. 1592–1617), 4 vols., fac. repr. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1980), 4:2067–69; and *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya* (A florilegium of song lyrics from Wu), comp. Chou Chih-piao (fl. early 17th century), preface dated 1616, fac. repr. in *Shan-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an* (Collectanea of rare editions of works on dramatic prosody), 36 vols. (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1984–87), 12:287–89. For a translation of this song suite, see appendix, item 1.

30. This formulaic four-character expression recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 13a, l. 3; and vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 7b, ll. 3–4.

31. This formulaic line occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1203, l. 19.

32. This formulaic four-character expression describing falling snow occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:864, l. 17; and in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien* (A supplementary anthology of Yüan tsa-chü drama), comp. Sui Shu-sen, 3 vols. (Shanghai: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), 1:135, l. 1; and 2:420, l. 21.

33. This formulaic four-character expression describing falling snow recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 67, p. 10a, l. 3.

34. This striking simile occurs in nearly the same form in the anonymous early hsi-wen drama entitled *Lo-ch'ang kung-chu p'o-ching ch'ung-yüan* (The princess of Lo-ch'ang and how the broken halves of her mirror were reunited). See *Sung-Yüan hsi-wen chi i* (Collected fragments of Sung and Yüan hsi-wen drama), comp. Ch'ien Nan-yang (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1956), p. 225, l. 1. It also occurs in different words in a poem by Li K'ai-hsien (1502–68). See *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 1:184, l. 5.

35. A variant of this couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 77, p. 8a, l. 6.

36. These two lines recur in ibid., l. 5.

37. This line recurs in ibid.

38. This line recurs in ibid., ll. 5–6.

39. This couplet is from a poem on snow by Su Shih (1037–1101), written in 1075. See *Su Shih shih-chi* (Collected poetry of Su Shih), 8 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1982), vol. 2, *chüan* 12, p. 605, ll. 4–5. It plays upon the double meanings of the terms "towers of jade" and "silver seas," which mean "shoulders" and "eyes" in esoteric Taoist terminology.

40. Fantastically shaped rock formations from the Lake Tai-hu region of Kiangsu province were a staple in Ming dynasty garden architecture. For a description of their characteristics and numerous illustrations, see *The Craft of Gardens*, by Ji Cheng, trans. Alison Hardie, originally written 1631–34 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 112–13 and passim.

41. This was the finest grade of tea manufactured for imperial consumption in what is now Fukien province during the Hsüan-ho reign period. See *Hsüan-ho Pei-yüan kung-ch'a lu* (Record of the tea manufactured for imperial consumption in Pei-yüan during the Hsüan-ho reign period [1119–25]), by Hsiung Fan (12th century), in *Shuo-fu* (The frontiers of apocrypha), comp. T'ao Tsung-i (c. 1360-c. 1403), 2 vols. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1963), vol. 2, *chüan* 60, pp. 20a-20b.

42. This couplet has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 5b, ll. 10–11. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:197, ll. 22–23 and 25–26.

43. The lyrics to this anonymous song suite may be found in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen* (Select flowers from the forest of song), comp. Chang Lu, preface dated 1525, 2 vols., fac. repr. (Peking: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing she, 1955), 2:867–72; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu* (Songs of a harmonious era), preface dated 1566, 20 *ts'e*, fac. repr. (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1934), *ts'e* 16, pp. 51b–53b. For a translation of this song suite, see appendix, item 2.

44. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 6b, l. 2.

45. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 1.

46. According to legend, Pai-li Hsi (7th century B.C.) and his wife endured such poverty together that they were reduced to burning their door-bars for fuel, but after undergoing years of separation and many vicissitudes they were happily reunited. See *Feng-su t'ung-i [chiao-chu]* (A comprehensive study of popular customs [edited and annotated]), comp. Ying Shao (fl. 167–95), ed. and annot. Wang Li-ch'i, 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), 2:592–93. This allusion is, of course, ironic since neither Hsi-men Ch'ing nor Wu Yüeh-niang has ever had to endure poverty, either together or apart, and they are seldom of one mind.

47. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:800, l. 20.

48. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 10b, l. 7.

49. This idiomatic expression occurs in *Pao-chien chi*, scene 11, p. 25, l. 3; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 45, p. 520, l. 14; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 83, p. 1073, ll. 6–7.

50. A variant of this vernacular saying recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 9a, l. 9.

51. This idiomatic expression recurs in ibid., vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 6a, l. 10.

52. Every district yamen had Six Offices corresponding to the Six Ministries that comprised the administrative core of the central government in the capital. The head yamen clerk had access to the Six Offices just as Hsi-men Ch'ing had the run of the six chambers in which his wife and concubines resided. The word *fang* can mean either "office" or "chamber" depending on the context. For another statement of this analogy that employs the same terminology, see ibid., vol. 4, ch. 74, p. 11a, ll. 4–5.

53. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:73, l. 20; 1:166, l. 8; and 1:252, l. 10; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao* (Draft lyrics from Hai-fu shan-t'ang), by Feng Wei-min (1511–80), preface dated 1566 (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1981), *chüan* 4, p. 194, l. 4. It also recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 32, p. 3a, l. 1; vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 18a, l. 1; and ch. 80, p. 12a, l. 2.

54. This formulaic reduplicative compound is ubiquitous in Chinese popular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1271, l. 6; *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching* (Sutra on the

deeds of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara), also known as *Hsiang-shan pao-chüan* (Precious scroll on Hsiang-shan), attributed to P'u-ming (fl. early 12th century), n.p., n.d. (probably 19th century), p. 17b, l. 4; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 82, p. 1358, l. 7; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Huan-sha chi* (The girl washing silk), by Liang Ch'en-yü (1519–91), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* edition, scene 14, p. 48, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 54, p. 629, l. 10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 55, l. 2.

55. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 6a, l. 6.

56. This long drama by Wang Shih-fu (13th century), consisting of five tsa-chü plays strung together to tell a single story, is the best loved and most widely known work in the entire repertory of Chinese dramatic literature. It is a recasting of *Ying-ying chuan* (The story of Ying-ying), by Yüan Chen (775–831), and is one of the plays most frequently quoted or alluded to in the *Chin P'ing Mei*. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi;* and *The Moon and the Zither: The Story of the Western Wing*, by Wang Shifu, trans. Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

57. Yang Kuei-fei (719–56), or Honored Consort Yang, was the favorite concubine of Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–56) of the T'ang dynasty. She is the most notorious imperial concubine in Chinese history and is the principal subject of a monograph by Howard S. Levy entitled *Harem Favorites of an Illustrious Celestial* (Taichung: Chung-t'ai Printing Company, 1958). For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi* (A manual for Hsüan-ho [1119–25] dominoes with supplementary material), original compiler's preface dated 1757, redactor's preface dated 1886 (N.p.: Hung-wen chai, 1888), *chüan* 1, p, 14a. It is also mentioned in a contest involving the names of domino combinations in scene 7 of *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (A southern version of the *Romance of the western chamber*), usually attributed to Li Jih-hua (fl. early 16th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 7, p. 21, l. 1.

58. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 4a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 20, l. 8.

59. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 123, l. 5; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 306, l. 19. The text in the play reads "jade hairpins" rather than "gossamer strands."

60. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 4a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 10.

61. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u (A* manual for Hsüan-ho [1119–25] dominoes), by Ch'ü Yu (1341–1427), in *Shuo-fu hsü (The frontiers of apocry pha* continued), comp. T'ao T'ing (cs 1610), fac. repr. of Ming ed. in *Shuo-fu san-chung (The frontiers of apocrypha:* Three recensions), 10 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1988), vol. 10, *chüan* 38, p. 16b; *P'ai-t'u* (Illustrated domino combinations), in *San-ts'ai t'u-hui* (Assembled illustrations from the three realms), comp. Wang Ch'i (c. 1535–c. 1614), preface dated 1609, 6 vols., fac. repr. (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen ch'u-pan she, 1970), vol. 4, *jen-shih* (Human affairs), *chüan* 8, p. 50b; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 9a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 1.

62. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 2, scene 1, p. 50, l. 11; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 223, l. 22.

63. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 7a; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 45a; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 6a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 3.

64. This is a line from a quatrain by Wu Kuan (cs 863). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 9, *chüan* 600, p. 6941, l. ll. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 14a; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 49a; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 9b; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 20, l. 7.

65. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 2, scene 3, p. 72, l. 13; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 250, ll. 22–23.

66. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 7b; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 45a; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 6b; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 7.

67. The "Three Bonds and Five Constants" are the bonds between father and son, ruler and subject, and husband and wife, and the cardinal virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and fidelity. This four-character expression occurs in a commentary on the *Lun-yü* (The analects of Confucius) by Ma Jung (79–166) and is quoted by Chu Hsi (1130–1200) in his own commentary on that work. See *Ssu-shu chang-chü chi-chu* (Collected commentary on the paragraphed and punctuated text of the *Four books*), by Chu Hsi (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), p. 59, l. 12. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1535, l. 11; *Hsüan-ho i-shih* (Forgotten events of the Hsüan-ho reign period [1119–25]) (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 62, l. 11; the Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ching-ch'ai chi* (The thorn hairpin), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed., scene 46, p. 133, l. 1; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 1, p. 163, l. 8; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i* (The romance of the Three Kingdoms), preface dated 1522, attributed to Lo Kuan-chung (14th century), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), vol. 1, *chüan* 6, p. 257, l. 13. For the domino combination designated by this name, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 3a; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 43a; and *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 5a.

68. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 125, l. 13; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 312, l. 9.

69. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 4a; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 43b; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 5a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 11.

70. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 3b; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 43a; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 5a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 20, l. 9.

71. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 2, p. 111, l. 3; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 296, ll. 3–4.

72. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 6a; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 44b; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 6a; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, ll. 2–3.

73. For this domino combination, see *Hsüan-ho p'ai-p'u*, p. 10b; *P'ai-t'u*, p. 46b; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 7b; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 21, l. 6.

74. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 2, p. 112, l. 6; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 299, l. 5.

75. This domino combination has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 8b, l. 8. In Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:368, l. 31, I translated it as "a pair of double fours," but I have not found it illustrated in the manuals that I have consulted.

76. For this domino combination, see *P'ai-t'u*, p. 48b; *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 8b; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 7, p. 20, l. 8.

77. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 2, scene 3, p. 72, l. 14; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, p. 251, ll. 2–3. The text in the play reads "mandarin ducks" rather than "spring breezes." The tune titles, names of domino combinations, and quoted

lines from the *Hsi-hsiang chi* that the various players come up with in the course of this drinking game all describe or foretell, albeit enigmatically, their characters and fates.

78. A variant of this idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 62, p. 24a, ll. 7–8.

79. This is the final couplet from an anonymous eight-line poem that occurs in the fourteenth-century anthology of moral aphorisms entitled *Ming-hsin pao-chien* (A precious mirror to illuminate the mind), preface dated 1393 (Microfilm copy of a Ming edition in the East Asian Library, University of Chicago), *chüan* 1, p. 11b, ll. 6–7. The whole poem occurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 28, p. 1a, ll. 3–6.

CHAPTER 22

1. A variant of this line occurs independently in the middle-period vernacular story *Ts'o-jen shih* (The wrongly identified corpse), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen* (Stories printed by the Ch'ing-p'ing Shan-t'ang), ed. T'an Cheng-pi (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957), p. 216, l. 13.

2. This line occurs independently in the early Ming novel *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan* (The three Sui quash the demons' revolt), fac. repr. (Tokyo: Tenri daigaku shuppan-bu, 1981), *chüan* 1, ch. 5, p. 42a, l. 2.

3. The ultimate source of this four-character expression is the *I-ching* (Book of changes). See *Chou-i yin-te* (A concordance to the *I-ching*) (Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1966), p. 47, col. 1, l. 20; and *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, trans. Richard Wilhelm, trans, from the German by Cary F. Baynes, 2 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961), 1:367, ll. 9–10. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Ch'i-kuo ch'un-ch'iu p'ing-hua* (The p'ing-hua on the events of the seven states), originally published in 1321–23 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 6, l. 9; the early vernacular story *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen* (Investigation of a leather boot convicts Erh-lang Shen), in *Hsing-shih heng-yen* (Constant words to awaken the world), ed. Feng Meng-lung (1574–1646), first published in 1627, 2 vols. (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1958), p. 251, I. 9; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 2, p. 190, l. 14; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ming-chu chi* (The luminous pearl), by Lu Ts'ai (1497–1537), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 43, p. 141, l. 6; *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 22b, l. 8; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 3, p. 16b, ll. 5–6; the novel *Nan Sung chih-chuan* (Chronicle of the Sung conquest of the South), attributed to Hsiung Ta-mu (mid-16th century), 10 *chüan* (Nanking: Shih-te fang, 1593), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti san-shih ssu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, thirty-fourth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1991), vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 21b,-l. 4; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 6b, l. 9; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 78, p. 1005, l. 14.

4. A variant of this line occurs independently in *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 1, ch. 5, p. 42a, l. 2.

5. This eight-line poem, with some textual variation, occurs in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan 2*, p. 1b, ll. 3–5; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 39, p. 504, ll. 6–9. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 1a, II. 3–6.

6. The figure given in the text is off by two years. I have emended it in order to bring it into conformity with the time scheme of the novel.

7. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 9a, l. 5.

8. This line occurs in a poem by Chu Chiang (8th century). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 11, *chüan* 769, p. 8732, l. 11. It also occurs in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *P'i-p'a chi* (The lute), by

Kao Ming (d. 1359), ed. Ch'ien Nan-yang (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), scene 3, p. 18, l. 8; in *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 8, p. 19, ll. 1–2; and in the sixteenth-century ch'uan-ch'i drama *Su Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi* (The story of Empress Su Ying's parrot), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional drama, first series) (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1954), item 45, *chüan 2*, scene 25, p. 13a, l. 10.

9. This song occurs, with some textual variation, in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien* (Complete compendium on effective physiognomy), comp. Yüan Chung-ch'e (1376–1458), in *Ku-chin t'u-shu chi-ch'eng* (A comprehensive corpus of books and illustrations ancient and modern), presented to the emperor in 1725, fac. repr. (Taipei: Wen-hsing shu-tien, 1964), *chüan* 641, p. 18b, ll. 3–5, where it is entitled "Song on the Ten Signs of Immodesty in a Woman."

10. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 65, p. 9b, ll. 7–8; and vol. 5, ch. 84, p. 4a, l. 5.

11. This may be an allusion to a passage in Book 10 of the *Lun-yü* (The analects of Confucius), where it is said of the taste of the gentleman, i.e., Confucius, "Red and violet coloured silks were not used for informal dress." See *Lun-yü yin-te* (A concordance to the *Analects*) (Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1966), Book 10, p. 18, l. 8; and *The Analects*, by Confucius, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), p. 102. This line is quoted in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 60, p. 5b, l. 6.

12. There is a poem attributed to Su Shih (1037–1101) celebrating a structure of the same name. See *Su Shih shih-chi*, vol. 8, *chüan* 50, p. 2755, ll. 1–2. The name also occurs, with appropriately dubious connotations, in a tsa-chü drama entitled *Seng-ni kung-fan* (A monk and a nun violate their vows), by Feng Wei-min (1511–80), in *Ming-jen tsa-chü hsüan* (An anthology of Ming tsa-chü drama), comp. Chou I-pai (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1958), scene 2, p. 340, l. 10.

13. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1003, l. 15; 4:1362, l. 19; and 4:1403, ll. 4–5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:659, l. 5; the Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ching-chung chi* (A tale of perfect loyalty), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 28, p. 73, l. 7; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 6, p. 67b, l. 5; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Mu-tan t'ing* (The peony pavilion), by T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550–1616), author's preface dated 1598, ed. and annot. Hsü Shuo-fang and Yang Hsiao-mei (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), scene 48, p. 237, l. ll. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, p. 8b, l. 5.

14. This song suite is by Ch'en To (fl. early 16th century). It is preserved in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:383–86; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 6, pp. 97a-98a; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2300–03; *Pei-kung tz'u-chi* (Anthology of northern-style song lyrics), comp. Ch'en So-wen (d. c. 1604), in *Nan-pei kung t'zu-chi*, 4:650–51; and in Ch'en To's own collection entitled *Ch'iu-pi yüeh-fu* (Songs by [Ch'en] Ch'iu-pi), in *Yin-hung I so-k'o ch'ü* (Song lyrics printed by [the master of] Rainbow Drinking Studio), comp. Lu Ch'ien, 2 vols. (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1967), 1:11b–13a. It is performed again in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 9b, l. 4; and is also mentioned in vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 7a, ll. 9–10. For a translation of this song suite, see appendix, item 3.

15. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:517, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:42, l. 10; and 2:419, l. 12; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 66, l. 7. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 12a, l. 8.

16. This formulaic four-character expression recurs four times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, p. 13a, ll. 5–6; ch. 26, p. 14a, l. 2; ch. 29, p. 3b, l. 11; and vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 11a, l. 9.

17. This proverbial couplet recurs five times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 35, p. 1b, l. 8; vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 10b, l. 4; ch. 79, p. 13a, ll. 8–9; vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 4a, l. 10; and ch. 93, p. 2a, 1.2.

18. Variants of this proverbial couplet are ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Ch'ien-Han shu p'ing-hua* (The p'ing-hua on the history of the Former Han dynasty), originally published in 1321–23 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 36, l. 14; the anonymous Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Sha-kou chi* (The stratagem of killing a dog), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 22, p. 81, l. 2; and *Ming-chu chi*, scene 6, p. 15, ll. 11–12. It also recurs four times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 14b, ll. 9–10; vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 19b, l. 1; ch. 53, p. 14b, ll. 9–10; and vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 10a, ll. 5–6.

19. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 13a, l. 6.

20. This idiomatic four-character expression, which literally means "neither three nor four," occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 110, l. 8; *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 1, ch. 3, p. 21a, l. 4; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 141, l. 4. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 4a, l. 4.

21. Variants of this idiomatic expression occur in *[Chiao-ting] Yüan-k'an tsa-chü san-shih chung* (A collated edition of Thirty tsa-chü dramas printed during the Yüan dynasty), ed. Cheng Ch'ien (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1962), p. 294, l. 10; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:400, l. 4; and 2:486, l. 16; and the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 10b, l. 7.

22. This idiomatic expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 47, p. 604, l. 4; and vol. 2, ch. 63, p. 812, l. 5.

CHAPTER 23

1. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1507, l. 17; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:922, l. 14.

2. The locus classicus for this proverbial saying, the literal meaning of which is "to undertake one thing and achieve two," is a statement attributed to Keng Yen (3–58) in his biography in *Tung-kuan Han-chi* (The Han record of the Tung-kuan [library]), comp. Pan Ku (32–92) et al., 2 vols., in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng* (A corpus of works from collectanea), 1st series (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1935–37), vol. 3731, *chüan* 8, p. 67, l. 1. It occurs in the *[Hsin-pien] Wu-tai shih p'ing-hua* ([Newly compiled] p'ing-hua on the history of the Five Dynasties), originally published in the fourteenth century (Shanghai: Chung-kuo ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1954), p. 225, l. 5; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan 2*, p. 67b, l. 6; the long sixteenth-century literary language tale *Shuang-ch'ing pi-chi* (A record of the two Ch'ing [Chang Cheng-ch'ing and Chang Shun-ch'ing]), in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang* (Celestial fragrance of national beauties), comp. Wu Ching-so (fl. late 16th century), preface dated 1587, 3 vols., fac. repr. in *Ming-Ch'ing shan-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti-erh chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of Ming-Ch'ing fiction, second series) (Taipei: T'ien-i ch'u-pan she, 1985), vol. 2, *chüan* 5, lower register, p. 15a, ll. 5–6; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 49, p. 572, ll. 6–7; the sixteenth-century ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ming-feng chi* (The singing phoenix), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 5, p. 18, l. 2; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 52, p. 673, l. 1; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 26a, ll. 8–9.

3. Liu-an is the name of an area in what is now Anhui province that produced what some Ming dynasty connoisseurs regarded as the finest tea in the empire. The best of it was

produced for imperial consumption. See *Liang-shan mo-t'an* (Ink talk from two mountains), by Ch'en T'ing (cs 1502), preface dated 1539, in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng*, 1st series, vol. 331, *chüan* 9, p. 74; and *Ch'a shu* (Notes on tea), by Hsü Tz'u-shu (1549–1604), in ibid., vol. 1480, p. 1.

4. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 8b, l. 3.

5. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 4, n. 6.

6. There is considerable overlap in the Chinese terminology employed in dice games and domino games since the markings on domino halves are the same as those on dice. The combinations named "Heaven and Earth Separated" and "Brocade Screen" are illustrated in *Hsüan-ho p'u ya-p'ai hui-chi, chüan* 1, p. 4a.

7. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in the Ming tsa-chü drama *Jen chin shu ku-erh hsün-mu* (Identifying the gold [hairpins] and the [jade] comb an orphan seeks his mother), in *Ku-pen Yüan-Ming tsa-chü* (Unique editions of Yüan and Ming tsa-chü drama), ed. Wang Chi-lieh, 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-chü ch'u-pan she, 1958), vol. 3, scene 4, p. 12b, l. 2; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch.41, p. 7a, l. 2.

8. Variants of this proverbial couplet are ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1019, ll. 6–7; 4:1561, l. 4; and 4:1625, ll. 15–16; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Chin-yin chi* (The golden seal), by Su Fu-chih (14th century), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 27, *chüan 2*, scene 16, p. 18a, ll. 4–5; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *San-yüan chi* (Feng Ching [1021–94] wins first place in three examinations), by Shen Shou-hsien (15th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 21, p. 57, ll. 1–2; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 36, p. 107, ll. 9–10; *Yü-huan chi*, scene 31, p. 112, ll. 11–12; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Yü-chüeh chi* (The jade thumb-ring), by Cheng Jo-yung (16th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 29, p. 91, l. 11; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 95, p. 1522, l. 8. It recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 12b, ll. 9–10; vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 26a, l. 4; and ch. 80, p. 4a, l. 4. A variant of the first line of this couplet is attributed to the Buddhist monk Ma-tsu Tao-i (709–88) in *Wu-teng hui-yüan* (The essentials of the five lamps), comp. P'u-chi (1179–1253), 3 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1984), vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 186, l. 8.

9. Wang Hsiang (185–269) was a famous paragon of filiality of whom it is reported: "Once in midwinter, when the ice was solid, his stepmother suddenly had a craving for fresh fish. Hsiang unfastened his clothes and was about to break the ice to get some when it happened that a place in the ice opened slightly and a fish came out." See *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World*, by Liu I-ch'ing; trans. Richard B. Mather (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 9. ll. 10–13.

10. For King Hsiang and the Goddess of Witch's Mountain, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 47.

11. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 8, ch. 68, p. 12b, l. 12.

12. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the early vernacular story *Ch'ien-t'ang meng* (The dream in Ch'ien-t'ang), included as part of the front matter in the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi* (The romance of the western chamber), fac. repr. (Taipei: Shih-chieh shu-chü, 1963), p. 3b, ll. 4–5; the early vernacular story *Yang Wen lan-lu hu chuan* (The story of Yang Wen, the road-blocking tiger), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 182, l. 7; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 118, l. 11; *Nan Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 23b, l. 7; the novel *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan* (Historical chronicle of the Sui and

T'ang dynasties), 12 *chüan* (Su-chou: Kung Shao-shan, 1619), microfilm of unique copy in Sonkeikaku Bunko, Tokyo, *chüan* 3, p. 42b, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 78, p. 894, l. 16; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 43, p. 552, l. 15. It recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 71, p. 16b, l. 4; and ch. 77, p. 5a, ll. 8–9.

13. This is the name of one of the Buddhist hells. It is mentioned in the tenth-century vernacular narrative entitled *Lu-shan Yüan-kung hua* (Story of Hui-yüan [334–416] of Mount Lu), in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi* (Collection of pien-wen from Tun-huang), ed. Wang Chung-min et al., 2 vols. (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1984), 1:178, l. 16; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 119, l. 8.

14. This is another example of the type of Chinese wordplay called *hsieh-hou yü*. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 5, n. 28. There is an ancient Chinese legend that a man named Ch'iu Hu married a wife and then went away to pursue his career. Upon returning home after an absence of several years he noticed an attractive young woman picking mulberry leaves by the side of the road and propositioned her but was firmly rejected. Only after arriving home did he discover that the object of his unwelcome attentions had been his own wife. See *Lieh-nü chuan* (Biographies of exemplary women), comp. Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.) (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1972), *chüan* 5, pp. 6b-7b; and *The Position of Women in Early China According to the Lieh Nü Chuan*, trans. Albert Richard O'Hara (Taipei: Mei Ya Publications, 1971), pp. 141–43. This story provides the plot for a famous Yüan tsa-chü drama by Shih Chün-pao (d. 1276) entitled *Ch'iu Hu hsi-ch'i* (Ch'iu Hu propositions his wife), in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:542–56. The expression that I have translated as "object of Ch'iu Hu's roving eye" consists of the first three characters in this title without the final character and is thus intended to call to mind the word "wife."

15. This conventional narrator's formula occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 134, l. 3.

16. This idiomatic expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1462, l. 15; the early vernacular story *San hsien-shen Pao Lung-t'u tuan-yüan* (After three ghostly manifestations Academician Pao rights an injustice), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen* (Common words to warn the world), ed. Feng Meng-lung (1574–1646), first published 1624 (Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan she, 1957), p. 179, l. 6; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 84, l. 4; and ch. 20, p. 294, l. 14.

17. The expression "to have flowers before one's eyes" means to be dizzy, or "to see stars." This couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 8a, l. 6.

18. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1056, l. 17; the Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Yu-kuei chi* (Tale of the secluded chambers), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 22, p. 61, l. 11; the early vernacular story *Chang Yü-hu su nü-chen kuan chi* (Chang Yu-hu spends the night in a Taoist nunnery), in *Yen-chü pi-chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, lower register, p. 16a, l. 10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 39, p. 506, ll. 5–6. It recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 4b, l. 7; and vol. 5, ch. 94, p. 9a, l. 7.

19. A variant of this idiomatic expression occurs in the anonymous thirteenth-century prosimetric narrative *Liu Chih-yüan chu-kung-tiao [chiao-chu]* (Medley in various modes on Liu Chih-yüan [collated and annotated]), ed. Lan Li-ming (Ch'eng-tu: Pa-Shu shu-she, 1989), part 12, p. 154, l. 10.

20. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 7b, ll. 8–9.

21. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Pao-chien chi*, scene 29, p. 53, l. 19; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 77, p. 13a, ll. 9–10.

22. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the early vernacular story *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a* (The White Maiden is eternally imprisoned under Thunder Peak Pagoda), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen*, p. 433, l. 3.

23. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 98, p. 1538, l. 12; and recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 53, p. 9a, l. 1; vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 9b, l. 6; and ch. 97, p. 4a, l. 9.

24. This is the final couplet from a quatrain by Tu Fu (712–70). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan 227*, p. 2451, l. 12. It also occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:186, l. 9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:390, l. 8; the anonymous early Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *P'o-yao chi* (The dilapidated kiln), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 19, *chüan 2*, scene 21, p. 15a, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 27, p. 351, l. 13; and ch. 39, p. 508, ll. 7–8.

CHAPTER 24

1. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:800, l. 17; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:362, l. 5; the long sixteenth-century literary tale *Liu sheng mi Lien chi* (The story of Liu I-ch'un's quest of Sun Pi-lien), in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang*, vol. 1, *chüan 2*, lower register, p. 37b, l. 11; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2a, p. 73, l. ll. It recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 11b, ll. 12; and ch. 77, p. 9b, l. 4.

2. For the "willow" in the quarter, see chap. 21, n. 2.

3. For Han Shou, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 13, n. 16.

4. These two lines of formulaic description occur together in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 193, l. 16.

5. Loans contracted in the sixth lunar month, the last month of the Chinese summer, were customarily repaid soon thereafter at the time of the autumn harvest. Variants of this proverbial saying occur in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 12, p. 39, l. 6; and *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 6, p. 13, l. 4.

6. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 19b, l. 5.

7. This four-character expression occurs independently in a lyric by Hsin Ch'i-chi (1140–1207); see *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1970, upper register, l. 13; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1654, l. 18; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 24, p. 90, l. 3; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 19, p. 34b, l. 3.

8. The locus classicus for this proverbial couplet, with some textual variation, is a passage in the *Yen t'ieh lun* (Discourses on salt and iron), comp. Huan K'uan (1st century B.C.). See *Yen-t'ieh lun [chiao-chu]* (Discourses on salt and iron [collated and annotated]), comp. Huan K'uan, ed. Wang Li-ch'i (T'ien-chin: Ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1983), *chüan* 6, ch. 30, p. 405, ll. 6–7. Variants occur in a document by Yüan Hsing-ch'ung (653–729); see *Ch'üan T'ang wen* (Complete prose of the T'ang), 20 vols. (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppan-sha, 1976), vol. 6, *chüan 272*, p. 3a, ll. 5–6; and in *Lan-chen tzu* (The master of idle simplicity), comp. Ma Yung-ch'ing (cs 1109), in *Pai-hai* (Sea of fiction), comp. Shang Chün (fl. 1593–1619), 5 vols., fac. repr. (Taipei: Hsin-hsing shu-chü, 1968), vol. 2, *chüan* 3, p. 18b, l. 7 (1270).

9. The first of these two lines occurs independently in a lyric by Yen Shu (991–1055), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:90, lower register, l. 6; and *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 3, p. 43b, ll. 8–9. The two lines occur together, in reversed order, in a lyric by Han Chü (c.

1086–1135), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:979, lower register, l. 13; and in the same order as in the novel in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 15, p, 87, ll. 7–8.

10. Recipes for the making of such firecrackers may be found in *Huo-hsi lüeh* (An outline of pyrotechnics), comp. Chao Hsüeh-min (c. 1719-c. 1805), author's preface dated 1780, 2 vols., fac. repr. (N.p.: T'ien-chin Library, n.d.), vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 2a, ll. 2–3; and pp. 6b 1. 2–7a, l. 3.

11. It was a folk custom on the night of the Lantern Festival for women to walk through the town in groups, cross bridges when they came to them, and rub the decorative protruding nailheads on the city gates. These apotropaic practices were known collectively as "walking off the hundred ailments." For contemporaneous accounts of this pastime as it was practiced in Peking, see *Wan-shu tsa-chi* (Miscellaneous records concerning the magistracy of Wan-p'ing), by Shen Pang, preface dated 1592 (Peking: Pei-ching ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), *chüan* 17, p. 190, ll. 11–12; and *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh* (A brief account of the sights of the imperial capital), comp. Liu Tung (cs 1634) and Yü I-cheng (d. c. 1635), pref. dated 1635 (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), *chüan 2*, p. 58, ll. 11–12; and p. 66, ll. 10–11. For a sixteen-line poem on this subject by Chou Yung (1476–1547), see ibid., p. 75, ll. 3–6. For a description of this custom as it was still practiced in Peking in the 1930s, see H. Y. Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu: The Life Cycle of a Peking Man, 2* vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 2:186.

12. For the names of these types of fireworks, see *Huo-hsi lüeh, chüan* 3, p. 26a, l. 8; *chüan* 3, p. 12b, l. 1; *chüan* 3, p. 22b, l. 2; and *chüan 2*, p. 17a, l. 3.

13. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the early hsi-wen drama *Hsiao Sun-t'u* (Little Butcher Sun), in *Yung-lo ta-tien hsi-wen san-chung chiao-chu* (An annotated recension of the three hsi-wen preserved in the *Yung-lo ta-tien*), ed. and annot. Ch'ien Nan-yang (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), scene 2, p. 261, l. 14; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 21, p. 77, l. 9; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ssu-hsi chi* (The four occasions for delight), by Hsieh T'ang (1512–69), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 5, p. 11, l. 6.

14. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the long mid-Ming literary tale *Huai-ch'un ya-chi* (Elegant vignettes of spring yearning), in *Yen-chü pi-chi*, vol. 3, *chüan* 9, upper register, p. 17a, l. 14; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 43, p. 10b, ll. 9–10.

15. The proximate source of the preceding four lines is probably *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 9, upper register, pp. 17a, l. 14–17b, l. 1. The last line occurs twice in the *Shih-chi* (Records of the historian), by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145-c. 90 B.C.), 10 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1972), vol. 1, *chüan 7*, p. 307, l. 12; and vol. 8, *chüan* 90, p. 2591, l. 13; and in *Li-wa chuan* (The story of Li Wa), by Po Hsing-chien (776–826), in *T'ang Sung ch'uan-ch'i chi*, p. 98, l. ll. For a definitive study and translation of this famous story, see Glen Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa* (London: Ithaca Press, 1983). The line in question is translated on p. 119, l. 14. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 46, p. 3b, l. 9.

16. On the numerous varieties of rockets, see *Huo-hsi lüeh, chüan* 1, pp. 7a-8a; and *chüan* 3–4, passim.

17. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 3b, l. 1; ch. 86, p. 13a, l. 5; and ch. 94, p. 3a, l. 10.

18. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 5a, l. ll. It also occurs in a variant form in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 48, p. 10b, l. 3; and vol. 5, ch. 90, p. 6a, l. 2.

19. There was a monastery of this name in Peking during the Ming dynasty. See *Wan-shu tsa-chi, chüan* 19, p. 224, l. 8.

20. A variant of this couplet occurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 1 1b, l. 5.

21. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 17, p. 66, l. 6; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 639, p. 30b, l. 6; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 61, p. 1028, l. 4.

22. A variant of this idiomatic expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 72, p. 821, I. 8. It recurs five times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 2b, l. 5; vol. 3, ch. 46, p. 7a, l. 7; p. 10b, l. 2; p. 14a, l. 5; and ch. 51, p. 9b, l. 5.

23. The eight disasters are the eight conditions in which sentient beings find it difficult to see a Buddha or hear his dharma. These are defined as when they are in hell; hungry ghosts; animals; in Uttarakuru (the northern continent where all is pleasant); in the long-life heavens (where life is long and easy); deaf, blind, and dumb; worldly philosophers; and in the intermediate period between a Buddha and his successor. See William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, A *Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1937), p. 41. The ability of Kuan-yin to deliver sentient beings from these eight disasters is mentioned in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 81, l. 4; ch. 8, p. 84, l. 16; and ch. 19, p. 212, l. 7.

24. The historical figure Kuan Yü (160–219), who is also one of the principal heroes of the famous historical novel *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, has been apotheosized as the Chinese God of War. For an account of his position in Chinese popular religion, see Henri Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, trans. Frank A. Kierman, Jr. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), pp. 150–55.

25. For the names of these types of fireworks, see *Huo-hsi lüeh, chüan* 3, p. 14b, l. 1; *chüan* 3, p. 23a, l. 2; and *chüan 2*, p. 19a, l. 4.

26. This is the last line of a quatrain by Li I (748–827). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 5, *chüan* 283, p. 3228, l. 16. Li I is also the protagonist of *Huo Hsiao-yü chuan*, the famous literary tale that is quoted in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 21, p. 3b, II. 9–10. See chap. 21, n. 17. This line also occurs in *Yü-chüeh chi*, scene 8, p. 23, l. 10; and *Huan-sha chi*, scene 14, p. 49, l. 11.

27. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 5b, l. 1.

28. For a description of the game that I have translated as "jacks" as it was played in Peking during the Ming dynasty, see *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh, chüan* 2, p. 66, ll. 8–9. There is a scene in the eighteenth-century novel *Hung-lou meng* that is almost certainly inspired by this *scene* in the *Chin P'ing Mei* and that also involves the same penalty for the loser. See *Hung-lou meng* (The dream of the red chamber), by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'in (1715–63) and Kao O (cs 1795, d.c. 1815), 4 vols. (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1972), vol. 3, ch. 64, p. 8, ll. 2–8, and n. 1; and A *Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, 3 vols. (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1978–80), 2:400.

29. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 125, l. 10; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 10, ch. 98, p. 18b, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 16a, l. 8.

30. This idiomatic expression occurs in *San-yüan chi*, scene 10, p. 25, l. 1.

31. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 5, p. 22a, 1.4; in a song lyric by Hsüeh Lun-tao (c. 1521–c. 1600), in *Ming-tai ko-ch'ü hsüan* (An anthology

of Ming song lyrics), comp. Lu Kung (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1956), p. 105, l. 24; and recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, in a variant form in vol. 3, ch. 41, p. 9b, l. 4; and in vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 12b, l. 5.

32. A variant of this proverbial couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 10b, 1.4. A variant of the last line occurs independently in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 104, p. 1595, l. 3.

33. This idiomatic expression occurs in *Seng-ni kung-fan*, scene 2, p. 340, l. 7; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 25a, l. 11.

34. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, p. 8b, l. 4.

35. A variant of this idiomatic expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:419, l. 12.

36. Aunt Feng is a fanciful name for the wind based on a story included in *Yu-yang tsa-tsu* (Assorted notes from Yu-yang), comp. Tuan Ch'eng-shih (p. 803–63) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), *hsü-chi* (second collection), *chüan* 3, pp. 227–29. This story is translated by Pedro Acosta in Kao, *Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic*, pp. 297–300.

37. This is the final couplet from a poem by the famous Sung dynasty poetess Chu Shu-chen (fl. 1078–1138), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 28:17970, l. 3.

38. This line is derived from a passage in the *Shu-ching* (Book of documents). See *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents*, trans. James Legge (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1960), p. 159.

39. The proximate source of this quatrain, with some textual variants, is the early vernacular story *Ts'ui Ya-nei pai-yao chao-yao* (The white falcon of Minister Ts'ui's son embroils him with demons), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 19, p. 263, l. 13.

CHAPTER 25

1. The Ch'ing-ming Festival, or Festival of Pure Brightness, is based on the solar calendar and falls on April 5 every year. It provides an occasion for picnic excursions to the countryside and sweeping the graves of one's ancestors. See *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, by Tun Li-ch'en (1855–1911), trans, and annot. Derk Bodde (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1965), pp. 26–27.

2. These two couplets occur in reverse order in a poem by Hsieh Chin (1369–1415). See *Hsieh hsüeh-shih wen-chi* (Collected works of Academician Hsieh), 10 *chüan*, preface dated 1562 (microfilm copy in the East Asian Library, University of Chicago), *chüan* 4, p. 15a, ll. 5–6; and Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, preface, n.29. This poem has also been attributed to T'ang Yin (1470–1524). See *T'ang Po-hu ch'üan-chi* (Complete works of T'ang Yin) (Taipei: Tung-fang shu-tien, 1956), *wai-chi, chüan* 2, p. 2b, ll. 1–2.

3. This idiomatic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., the early hsi-wen drama *Huan-men tzu-ti ts'o li-shen* (The scion of an official's family opts for the wrong career), in *Yung-lo ta-tien hsi-wen san-chung chiao-chu*, scene 5, p. 231, l. 9; *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 4, wedge, p. 140, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1528, l. 11; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 260, l. 4; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (A southern version of the *Romance of the western chamber*), by Lu Ts'ai (1497–1537), in *Hsi-hsiang hui-pien* (Collected versions of the *Romance of the western chamber*), comp. Huo Sung-lin (Chi-nan: Shan-tung wen-i ch'u-pan she, 1987), *chüan 2*, scene 26, p. 387, l. 8; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 33, l. 3; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 46, p. 534, l. 8. It

recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 12b, l. 10; and vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 8b, l. 4.

4. There is an anecdote about the T'ang grand councilor Wang Po (759–830) that when he was a poor student he used to take advantage of Buddhist charity by turning up to eat every day when the dinner bell was rung at a local monastery. When the monks got tired of his freeloading, they started to ring the dinner bell after they had finished eating, so that when he showed up he found to his chagrin that there was nothing left to eat. See *T'ang chih-yen* (A gleaning of T'ang anecdotes), by Wang Ting-pao (870-c. 954) (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957), *chüan 7*, p. 73, ll. 8–11. This anecdote was later grafted onto the legends about the impoverished youth of the Sung grand councilor Lü Meng-cheng (946–1011) and is best known in the various dramatic treatments of his rags-to-riches story. For a study of these plays and an annotated translation of the *P'o-yao chi*, see Dale H. Hoiberg, "*P'o-yao chi* and *Ts'ai-lou chi:* Seven and a Half Centuries on the Chinese Stage," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1993. Scene 13, in which this episode takes place, is translated on pp. 261–81.

5. It is alleged that during the T'ien-pao reign period (742–56), Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty had swings erected at the time of the Cold Food Festival for the delectation of his palace ladies and named it the "sport of demi-immortals." See *K'ai-yüan Tien-pao i-shih* (Forgotten events of the K'ai-yüan [713–41] and T'ien-pao [742–56] reign periods), comp. Wang Jen-yü (880–942), in *K'ai-yüan T'ien-pao i-shih shih-chung* (Ten works dealing with forgotten events of the K'ai-yüan and T'ien-pao reign periods), ed. Ting Ju-ming (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), *chüan 2*, p. 88, ll. 8–10.

6. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 3b, l. 2.

7. The locus classicus for this statement is a quotation from a lost work in the *Ching-Ch'u sui-shih chi* (Record of seasonal observances in the Ching-Ch'u region), comp. Tsung Lin (c. 501–565). See *Ching-Ch'u sui-shih chi [i-chu]* (Record of seasonal observances in the Ching-ch'u region [translated and annotated]), trans, and annot. T'an Lin (n.p.: Hu-pei jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1985), section 16, p. 67, l. 7. A variant of this statement also appears in a lyric in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 3, p. 16, l. 3. The version in the *Chin P'ing Mei* is closer to that in *P'i-p'a chi*. For confirmation that in the Hopei-Shantung region swinging was still a common practice at the Ch'ing-ming Festival during the Wan-li reign period (1573–1620), see Wu *tsa-tsu* (An assortment of information under five rubrics), by Hsieh Chao-che (1567–1624), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 147, ll. 11–13.

8. This formulaic couplet occurs, in reverse order, in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1055, l. 13. It recurs four times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, p. 7b, ll. 10–11; vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 4b, ll. 7–8, and p. 10a, ll. 9–10; and ch. 85, p. 4a, ll. 1–2.

9. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the twelfth-century chantefable *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Master Tung's Western chamber romance), by Tung Chieh-yüan (late 12th century), ed. and annot. Ling Ching-yen (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1962), *chüan* 4, p. 92, l. 10; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1313, l. 4; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 17, p. 65, l. 9; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 69, p. 786, l. 7.

10. This idiomatic four-character expression, which literally means "white eyebrows and red eyes," is defined as a slang term for "talk without any foundation" in *Wan-shu tsa-chi, chüan* 17, p. 194, l. 2. It is used to refer to what we would call "barefaced effrontery." For a more fanciful, but unconvincing, explanation of the term, see *Wan-li yeh-huo pien* (Private gleanings of the Wan-li reign period [1573–1620]), by Shen Te-fu (1578–1642), author's

preface dated 1619, 3 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1980), vol. 3, *pu-i* (supplement), *chüan* 4, pp. 919–20. It recurs five times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 11a, l. 3; p. 19a, ll. 2–3 and 8; vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 29b, l. 1; and ch. 76, p. 12b, l. 6.

11. This idiomatic expression recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 1b, l. 6; and vol. 3, ch. 50, p. 5a, ll. 3–4.

12. This formulaic four-character expression recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 1a, l. 11; vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 4b, l. 3; and vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 15b, l. 7.

13. This idiomatic expression recurs twice in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 43, p. 4b, l. 7; and vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 23a, ll. 10–11.

14. Variants of this idiomatic expression recur twice in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 5a, l. 1; and vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 3b, l. 7.

15. The expression "saffron soup" is a slang term for rice wine, which is often pale yellow in color.

16. This idiomatic expression, which literally means "to misstate left as right," recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 20a, l. 6.

17. This is an example of the type of Chinese wordplay called *hsieh-hou yü*. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 5, n. 28. A variant of this expression occurs in a contemporary collection of slang terms and *hsieh-hou yü* entitled *Liu-yüan hui-hsüan chiang-hu fang-yü* (Slang expressions current in the demimonde selected from the six licensed brothels [of Chin-ling]), in *Han-shang huan wen-ts'un* (Literary remains of the Han-shang Studio), by Ch'ien Nan-yang (Shanghai: Shang-hai wen-i ch'u-pan she, 1980), p. 164, lower register, l. 5. A variant recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 5a, l. 3; and the last line recurs independently in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 10b, l. 6.

18. This graphic couplet recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, p. 7b, l. 11; and ch. 38, p. 2b, ll. 10–11.

19. This idiomatic expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:167, l. 6; 1:369, l. 12; 2:670, l. 2; 3:937, l. 11; and 4:1394, l. 21; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:824, l. 13.

20. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 15a, ll. 6–7.

21. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 435, l. 15; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 30, p. 337, l. 5; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 3, ch. 28, p. 23b, l. 1; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 30, p. 388, l. 13; and ch. 47, p. 611, l. 12.

22. This idiomatic saying depends for its force on a pun between the word *chu*, meaning "post," and the word *chu*, meaning "master." It occurs in a variant form in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Chih-yü (1185–1269). See *Hsü-t'ang Ho-shang yü-lu* (Recorded sayings of the Monk Hsü-t'ang), in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (The newly edited great Buddhist canon compiled in the Taishō reign period [1912–26]), 85 vols. (Tokyo: Taishō issaikyō kankōkai, 1922–32), vol. 47, no. 2000, *chüan* 1, p. 985, lower register, l. 9. It recurs in the same or variant forms five times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 17a, l. 9; vol. 3, ch. 44, p. 6b, l. 2; vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 23a, l. 4; ch. 76, p. 19a, p. 5; and vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 7b, ll. 6–7.

23. This formulaic four-character expression recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 28, p. 7a, ll. 6–7; ch. 29, p. 3b, l. 11; and vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 2b, l. 11.

24. This formulaic couplet is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:563, l. 5; 4:1673, ll. 10 and 19; 4:1753, l. 1; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:485,

l. 21; and 3:924, l. 1; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 531, ll. 9–10.

25. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 5a, ll. 3–4.

26. This proverbial couplet occurs in the Ming novel *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan* (Romance of the late T'ang and Five Dynasties)(Peking: Pao-wen t'ang shu-tien, 1983), ch. 40, p. 162, ll. 17–18; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 6b, l. 8. The first line also occurs independently in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 92, p. 1185, l. 14.

27. To "injure the redbud tree" means to disrupt amity in the family. This is based on a story that reads as follows: "There was a family consisting of a man named T'ien Chen (late 1st century B.C.) and his two brothers who resided in the capital district. Though they were well-to-do, they did not get along together and decided to divide up the family property. They measured out their gold and silver and other valuables, along with their real estate and other property, and divided it equally between them. All that remained was a redbud tree in full flower in front of the reception hall. They decided to split it into three segments the following morning so that each of them could have a part of it. The tree immediately dried up, looking as though it had been scorched, the leaves wilted, the branches broken, and the root and stem withered. When T'ien Chen approached it, with saw in hand, the next morning he was astonished at the sight and said to his brothers, 'This tree stems from a single trunk, and it has withered on hearing that it was to be split apart. How much the less should human brothers consent to being separated. If they do so, they are not the equals of this tree.' At this they could not control their grief and gave up the idea of splitting the tree. The tree, in turn, responded by reverting immediately to its flourishing state. The brothers were so moved by this that they recombined their property and became known as a filial family." See *Hsü Ch'i Hsieh chi* (Continuation *of Tales of Ch'i Hsieh*), by Wu Chun (469–520), in Wang Kuo-liang, *Hsü Ch'i Hsieh chi yen-chiu* (A study of *Hsü Ch'i Hsieh chi*) (Taipei: Wen shih che ch'u-pan she, 1987), pp. 24–25. A more elaborate version of the same story, in which one of the brothers has the same given name as Hsi-men Ch'ing, and in which it is the wife of one of the brothers who makes trouble between them, is related in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 23, pp. 85–86. This couplet recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 58, p. 15a, l. 3; and p. 17a, l. 10.

28. This is the first couplet in an eight-line poem by Shao Yung (1011–77), the famous Neo-Confucian philosopher. See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 7:4512, l. 7. It has become proverbial and occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., the thirteenth-century encyclopedia *Shih-lin kuang-chi* (Expansive gleanings from the forest of affairs), fac. repr. of 14th-century ed. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1963), *ch'ien-chi, chüan* 9, p. 6b, 1.4; *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 2b, l. 7; the thirteenth-century hsi-wen drama *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan* (Top graduate Chang Hsieh), in *Yung-lo ta-tien hsi-wen san-chung chiao-chu*, scene 42, p. 182, l. 13; the early vernacular story *Ts'ui Tai-chao sheng-ssu yüan-chia* (Artisan Ts'ui and his ghost wife), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 8, p. 99, l. 14; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 19, p. 61, l. 4; the anonymous Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Hsün-ch'in chi* (The quest for the father), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 5, p. 13, l. 12; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Hsiang-nang chi* (The scent bag), by Shao Ts'an (15th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 11, p. 32, l. 8. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 11a, l. 3.

29. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 94, p. 8b, ll. 6–7.

30. A variant of this proverbial expression occurs in the middle-period vernacular story *Ho-t'ung wen-tzu chi* (The story of the contract), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 33, l. 11.

31. This four-character expression occurs in the *Shih-chi* in a paraphrase of a famous passage in the *Shu-ching* (Book of documents) indicting King Chou (r. 1086–1045 B.C.), the "evil last ruler" of the Shang dynasty, for his uxoriousness. See *Shih-chi*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 121, l. 16; and p. 122, ll. 13–14; and Legge, *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents*, pp. 302–303. The relevant text reads: "A man of old has said:

> The hen does not crow at dawn.
> If the hen should crow at dawn,
> It portends the destruction of the household.

Now King Chou of the Shang dynasty heeds only the words of his spouse."

32. See the preceding note. The unmistakable implication is that Hsi-men Ch'ing himself is an "evil last ruler."

33. This formulaic expression, or an orthographic variant, recurs three times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 11b, l. 11; vol. 4, ch. 67, p. 19b, l. 11; and vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 11a, l. 3.

34. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 11a, l. 4.

35. The first line of this proverbial couplet has already occurred in ibid., vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 1a, l. 6. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 3, n. 2. A variant of the second line that is closer in meaning to the one given here than those cited in the above note occurs in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ch'ien-chin chi* (The thousand pieces of gold), by Shen Ts'ai (fl. 15th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 23, p. 74, l. 7.

36. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:520, l. 13; and 3:904, ll. 14–15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:527, l. 19; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 109, p. 1643, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 143, l. 4; and *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 17, p. 62, l. 6.

37. This formulaic reduplicative expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 6b, l. 9.

38. A variant of these four proverbial lines, which state the moral both positively and negatively, has already occurred in ibid., vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 6b, ll. 3–4. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:104, ll. 30–33. In addition, see the early vernacular story *Wan Hsiu-niang ch'ou-pao shan-t'ing-erh* (Wan Hsiu-niang gets her revenge with a toy pavilion), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 37, p. 561, l. ll. The positive and negative components of this proverbial complex frequently occur independently of each other.

39. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 18, p. 315, l. 15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:66, ll. 16–17; *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 126, l. 5; the thirteenth-century prosimetric narrative *T'ien-pao i-shih chu-kung-tiao* (Medley in various modes on the forgotten events of the T'ien-pao [742–56] reign period), by Wang Po-ch'eng (fl. late 13th century), in *Chu-kung-tiao liang-chung* (Two exemplars of the medley in various modes), ed. and annot. Ling Ching-yen and Hsieh Po-yang (N.p.: Ch'i-Lu shu-she, 1988), p. 244, l. 5; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 248, l. 3; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 8, p. 353, l. 4; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 39, p. 632, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 14, p.

165, l. 7; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 32, p. 412, l. ll. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 39, p. 13a, l. 11.

40. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 9, p. 430, l. 4; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan 2*, p. 18a, l. 5; *Liu sheng mi Lien chi, chüan 2*, lower register, p. 37a, l. 11; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 54, p. 625, l. 2.

41. This formulaic couplet occurs in the middle-period vernacular story *Chieh-chih-erh chi* (The story of the ring), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 251, l. 13; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 62, p. 26a, l. 10.

CHAPTER 26

1. This poem is derived, with some textual variation, from one by Shao Yung (1011–77). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 7:4505, ll. 6–7. A version closer to that in the novel is included in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan 2*, p. 4a, ll. 10–13, where it is also attributed to Shao Yung. Another version of the same poem that is closer to the original recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 1a, ll. 3–6. The last three couplets of this poem have become proverbial and often occur independently, without attribution. See, e.g., *Chao Ch'ing-hsien kung tso-yu ming* (Desk-side maxims of Chao Pien [1008–84]), in *Shan-yu wen* (Texts conducive to goodness), comp. Ch'en Lu (13th century), preface dated 1221, in *Pai-ch'uan hsüeh-hai* (A sea of knowledge fed by a hundred streams), comp. Tso Kuei (13th century), preface dated 1273, fac. repr. of original edition (Peking: Chung-kuo shu-tien, 1990), *chia-chi* (first collection), p. 58, 1a, l. 12-1b, l. 3; the middle-period vernacular story *Hsin-ch'iao shih Han Wu mai ch'un-ch'ing* (Han Wu-niang sells her charms at New Bridge Market), in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo* (Stories old and new), ed. Feng Meng-lung (1574–1646), 2 vols. (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1958), vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 74, l. 6; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 75, p. 1253, l. 4; and vol. 4, ch. 103, p. 1587, l. 14; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 59, p. 767, l. 10.

2. A similar proverbial saying occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 394, ll. 12–13.

3. The ultimate source of this proverbial saying is a passage in the *Huai-nan tzu* (Book of the Prince of Huai-nan), an eclectic work compiled under the auspices of the Prince of Huai-nan, Liu An (d. 122 B.C.). See the text in *Huai-nan hung-lieh chi-chieh* (Collected commentaries on the *Huai-nan tzu*), ed. Liu Wen-tien, 2 vols. (Taipei: T'ai-wan Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1969), vol. 2, *chüan* 15, p. 17b, l. 4, as emended by Wang Nien-sun (1744–1832). It occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1579, l. 10.

4. The statement that walls have ears is already described as proverbial in *Kuan-tzu chiao-cheng, chüan* 11, ch. 31, p. 176, l. 2. See Rickett, *Guanzi*, p. 416, l. 13. A variant of this saying occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Shan-tzu (11th century) in *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 16, p. 1048, l. 13. This couplet occurs in *Shih-lin kuang-chi, ch'ien-chi, chüan* 9, p. 6b, l. 14; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 5a, l. 8. It also recurs in a variant form in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 59, p. 20a, ll. 4–5.

5. The first of these two lines occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:896, l. 20. The two lines recur together, with an insignificant variant in the second line, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 17a, l. 10.

6. A variant of the first of these two lines occurs independently in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 63, p. 808, l. 9. The two lines occur together, with some textual variation, in the ephemeral late Ming compilation *Hsin-ch'i teng-mi: Chiang-hu ch'iao-yü* (Novel and unusual lantern riddles: Witticisms current in the demimonde),

reprinted in *Han-shang huan wen-ts'un*, p. 170, upper register, l. 4; and recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 46, p. 5a, l. 1.

7. A variant of this line occurs in the recently discovered early seventeenth-century tale *Hai-ling i-shih* (The debauches of Emperor Hai-ling of the Chin dynasty [r. 1149–61]), in *Ssu wu-hsieh hui-pao* (No depraved thoughts collectanea), comp. Ch'en Ch'ing-hao and Wang Ch'iu-kuei, 45 vols. (Taipei: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1995–97), 1:82, l. 7.

8. This four-character expression occurs as early as the twelfth century. See *Weng-yu hsien-p'ing* (Idle criticism from a humble abode), by Yüan Wen (1119–90), in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng*, 1st series, vol. 286, *chüan* 8, p. 77, l. ll. It also occurs in the early vernacular story *Sung Ssu-kung ta-nao Chin-hun Chang* (Sung the Fourth raises hell with Tightwad Chang), in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo*, vol. 2, *chüan* 36, p. 527, l. 16; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 1, scene 12, p. 36a, l. 7; and *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 1b, l. 6.

9. This proverbial couplet occurs in this form in *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 20, p. 966, ll. 5–6. Close variants also occur in *Ch'in ping liu-kuo p'ing-hua* (The p'ing-hua on the annexation of the Six States by Ch'in), originally published in 1321–23 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 21, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:6, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:173, l. 15; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 24, p. 91, l. 8; *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 17, p. 47, ll. 2–3; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 17, p. 789, l. 26; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 61, p. 1028, l. 8; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 36, p. 416, l. 15; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 40, p. 522, l. 13; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Han-tan meng chi* (The dream at Han-tan), by T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550–1616), author's preface dated 1601, in *T'ang Hsien-tsu chi* (Collected works of T'ang Hsien-tsu), ed. Hsü Shuo-fang and Ch'ien Nan-yang, 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), vol. 4, scene 15, p. 2349, l. 7.

10. The proximate source of this proverbial saying is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 30, p. 464, l. 2, where it occurs in a passage describing the entrapment of Wu Sung that is the obvious inspiration for this episode in the *Chin P'ing Mei*. This saying also occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1028, l. *7; San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 39, p. 510, l. 14; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Shih-hou chi* (The lion's roar), by Wang T'ing-no (fl. 1593–1611), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 21, p. 72, l. 2.

11. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:771, l. 19; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 21, p. 65, ll. 8–9; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan 2*, scene 35, p. 411, l. 1; and, with a slight variant, in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 77, p. 883, l. 2.

12. The nine-tailed fox fairy refers to Ta-chi (d. 1045 B.C.), the voluptuous and amoral favorite of King Chou (r. 1086–1045 B.C.), the "evil last ruler" of the Shang dynasty. According to legend, a nine-tailed fox fairy sucked out her soul and usurped her body in order to tempt King Chou to his destruction. See *Wu-wang fa Chou p'ing-hua* (The p'ing-hua on King Wu's conquest of King Chou), originally published in 1321–23 (Shanghai: Chung-kuo ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 6; the translation of this work in chapter 2 of Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*, Volume 1: *The Authorship of the Feng Shen Yen I* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962), p. 15; and *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 4b. These two lines recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 3a, ll. 5–6; and a variant of the second line occurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 26a, l. 2. Note that in these passages Hsi-men Ch'ing is implicitly equated with the archetypical "evil last ruler."

13. A variant of this expression occurs in *Mu-tan t'ing*, scene 55, p. 278, l. 5; and another occurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 26, p. 11a, l. 3.

14. According to Chinese folk belief, before the souls of the dead are sent back from the underworld to be reincarnated, they are given a soul-disorienting drug so that they will no longer remember the events of their former lives. The term occurs in an anonymous song in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü* (Complete nondramatic song lyrics of the Yüan), comp. Sui Shu-sen, 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1964), 2:1799, l. 1; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 87, p. 1126, l. 2.

15. This *hsieh-hou yü* recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 40, p. 5b, l. 7.

16. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:401, l. 10; the early vernacular story *Shih-wu kuan hsi-yen ch'eng ch'iao-huo* (Fifteen strings of cash: a casual jest leads to uncanny disaster), in *Hsing-shih heng-yen*, vol. 2, *chüan* 33, p. 699, l. 14; the middle-period vernacular story *Shen Hsiao-kuan i-niao hai ch'i-ming* (Master Shen's bird destroys seven lives), in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo*, vol. 2, *chüan* 26, p. 392, l. 8; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 11, p. 32, l. 8; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 30, p. 464, l. 11; *and Yü-chüeh chi*, scene 20, p. 63, l. 7.

17. This four-character expression occurs in *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 204, l. 13; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 3b, ll. 1–2; and *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 21a. 11, 4–5.

18. A variant of this line occurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 95, p. 12b, ll. 3–4.

19. Variants of this proverbial couplet occur in *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 8, p. 41, l. 16; *Yang Wen lan-lu hu chuan*, p. 180, l. 13, and p. 185, l. 2; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 4, p. 9, l. 12; the Yüan-Ming hsi-wen drama *Su Wu mu-yang chi* (Su Wu herds sheep) in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 20, *chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 19a, ll. 4–5; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 1, scene 7, p. 23b, ll. 5–6; *Hsün-ch'in chi*, scene 9, p. 29, l. 3; and *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 4, ch. 15, p. 1a, l. 7. The second line also occurs independently in *Pao-chien chi*, scene 11, p. 23, l. 3.

20. This line occurs in *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 18, p. 50, l. 6; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 95, l. 2.

21. This four-character expression occurs in a quatrain by Tu Fu (712–70), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 234, p. 2580, l. 7, where it describes the hasty makeup of an imperial favorite before an audience with the emperor. It also occurs in a poem by Fan Ch'eng-ta (1126–93), *Fan Shih-hu chi* (Collected works of Fan Ch'eng-ta), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), vol. 1, *chüan* 10, p. 130, l. 3; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 13, p. 306, l. 2; an anonymous song in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1797, l. 12; *Ch'ien-t'ang meng*, p. 3b, l. 15; *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 1:139, l. 6; and *Huan-sha chi*, scene 10, p. 33, l. 5. This line occurs together with the following line in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 7, p. 18, l. 7.

22. In ancient times, according to legend, one Cheng Chiao-fu encountered two nymphs on the bank of a river and asked them to untie their girdle pendants for him. They did as he requested, but by the time he had walked a few steps away, both the girdle pendants and the river nymphs had vanished. See *Le Lie-sien Tchouan*, trans. Max Kaltenmark (Peking: Université de Paris, Publications du Centre d'études sinolo-giques de Pékin, 1953), pp. 96–101.

23. It is alleged that the officers of the Han dynasty Secretariat used to hold cloves in their mouths in order to sweeten their breath when reporting to the emperor. The elaborate conceits of this couplet simply mean that she exposed her charms and kissed her lover. Variants of this couplet occur in *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 247, l. 16;

and *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 38a, ll. 4–5; and recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 1a, ll. 9–10; and vol. 5, ch. 97, p. 7a, l. 11.

24. Wild ducks refer to shoes because of a story about Wang Ch'iao (1st century), who was able to transform his shoes into wild ducks that would carry him wherever he wished to go. See *Hou-Han shu* (History of the Later Han dynasty), comp. Fan Yeh (398–445), 12 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965), vol. 10, *chüan* 82a, p. 2712; and *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians: Biographies of Fang-shih*, trans. Kenneth J. De-Woskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 52. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 80, p. 4b, l. 11; and vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 4a, l. 1.

25. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 51, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:913, l. 2; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 8, ch. 71, p. 25a, ll. 10–11; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 4a, l. 2.

26. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Chu Tun-ju (1081–1159), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:852, lower register, l. 11; a poem by Lu Yu (1125–1210), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 41:25558, l. 1; *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 44, p. 187, l. 12; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 10, p. 296, l. 7; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:78, l. 2; a song suite attributed to a fourteenth-century singing girl in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1276, l. 6; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 42, p. 134, l. 12; and *Tz'u-nüeh* (Pleasantries on lyrical verse), by Li K'ai-hsien (1502–68), in *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chu chi-ch'eng* (A corpus of critical works on classical Chinese drama), comp. Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü yen-chiu yüan (The Chinese Academy of Dramatic Arts), 10 vols. (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-chü ch'u-pan she, 1959), 3:287, l. 6.

27. This four-character expression occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1509, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:325, l. 8; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2b, p. 120, l. 11; but it occurs together with the preceding line in the early Ming tsa-chü drama *Yü-ch'iao hsien-hua* (A casual dialogue between a fisherman and a woodcutter), in *Ku-pen yüan Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 4, scene 4, p. 11b, ll. 3–4; an anonymous song suite in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 5, p. 22a, ll. 4–5; *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2a, p. 68, l. 10; and a song by Hsüeh Lun-tao (c. 1531–c. 1600), in *Ming-tai ko-ch'ü hsüan*, p. 105, l. 25.

28. This four-character expression literally means "putting up her hair and doing up her face" but is often used figuratively. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 13a, l. 4; vol. 4, ch. 67, p. 15a, ll. 7–8; and ch. 75, p. 21a, l. 2. It also occurs in variant forms in ibid., ch. 72, p. 5a, l. 6; and vol. 5, ch. 97, p. 7a, ll. 5–6.

29. The first line of this proverbial couplet occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:36, l. 11; and 270, l. 16; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:910, l. 20; and *Sha-kou chi*, scene 31, p. 110, l. 6. The two lines recur together in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 5a, l. 1.

30. A variant of this couplet occurs in *Shih-hou chi*, scene 20, p. 66, l. 6.

31. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 81, p. 4b, l. 11.

32. This is another example of the author's use of transparently significant names for minor characters in the novel.

33. Although there actually was a place of this name, it is obviously chosen here because of its semantic meaning, which is "filial and righteous."

34. This would have been a capital offense according to the Ming penal code. See *Ming-tai lü-li hui-pien* (Comprehensive edition of the Ming penal code and judicial regulations), comp. Huang Chang-chien, 2 vols. (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1979), vol. 2, *chüan* 19, p. 801, ll. 3–7.

35. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 94, p. 10a, l. 1, immediately following the line, "raise sons and raise daughters."

36. A variant of this couplet occurs in ibid., ch. 92, p. 9b, ll. 7–8.

37. A punning version of this expression occurs in an anecdote attributed to the year 1126 in which it is employed to satirize the high officials of the time for pulling the wool over the eyes of the emperor. See *Hsüan Cheng tsa-lu* (Miscellaneous records of the Hsüan-ho [1119–25] and Cheng-ho [1111–18] reign periods), by Chiang Wan-li (1198–1275), in *Shuo-fu san-chung*, 5:2191, p. 4a, ll. 5–7. The same pun is recorded, and made explicit, in *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 3:1025, l. 9. This expression also occurs in the anonymous Yüan or early Ming tsa-chü drama *Liang-shan ch'i-hu nao T'ung-t'ai* (The seven tigers of Liang-shan raid T'ung-t'ai), in *Ming-jen tsa-chü hsüan*, p. 631, l. 8; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 10b, l. 1.

38. This four-character expression occurs in *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2b, p. 109, l. 9.

39. See note 32 above.

40. This quatrain, with some textual variation, has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 51, ll. 8–9. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:196, ll. 6–13.

41. This is an ancient name for the Takla Makan desert in Sinkiang but has long since become a part of mythical geography, standing for the distant and dangerous obstacles to travel in Central Asia. It is the site of an important episode on Hsüan-tsang's journey to the West in *Hsi-yu chi*, chap. 22.

42. This formulaic six-character expression occurs in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 3, p. 15, l. 5; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 32, p. 103, l. 2; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 306, l. 16.

43. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 290, l. 6; and vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 423, l. 6.

44. This expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 7a, l. 1; and vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 2a, l. 2.

45. A variant of this expression, probably based on a proverbial saying, occurs in a poem by Ch'en Shih-tao (1053–1102). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 19:12678, l. 14; and *Chi-le pien* (Chicken ribs collection), by Chuang Ch'o (c. 1090–c. 1150), preface dated 1133 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), *chüan* 3, p. 117, l. 14. Variants also occur in *Tsa-tsuan hsü* (Miscellany continued), attributed to Wang Ch'i (11th century), in *Shuo-fu*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 30a, l. 10; a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Hui-ch'in (1059–1117), *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 19, p. 1259, ll. 1–2; and the poetical exegesis of the *Diamond Sutra* by the Buddhist Monk Tao-ch'uan (fl. 1127–63), *Chin-kang pan-jo-po-lo-mi ching chu* (Commentary on the *Vajracchedikā prajñāpāramitā sutra*), preface dated 1179, in *[Shinzan] Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō*, vol. 24, no. 461, *chüan* 2, p. 548, upper register, l. 9. The same expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 11b, l. 5.

46. This *hsieh-hou yü* is based on a pun between the word *liao*, meaning "to burn," and the word *liao*, meaning "to finish off."

47. The ultimate source of this proverbial couplet is a line in the *Chiao-liao fu* (Rhapsody on the wren), by Chang Hua (232–300). See *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 13, p. 26a, ll. 9–10. It occurs, without attribution, in the same form as in the novel in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 1, p. 9b, ll. 2–3.

48. This proverbial couplet, implying that one should put up with one's lot in life, occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 179, l. 9; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*,

vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 46, l. 6.

49. This proverbial saying is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:202, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:414, ll. 1–2; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 16, p. 96, l. 10; the earliest extant printed edition of the Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Pai-t'u chi* (The white rabbit), *[Hsin-pien] Liu Chih-yüan huan-hsiang Pai-t'u chi* ([Newly compiled] Liu Chih-yüan's return home: The white rabbit), in *Ming Ch'eng-hua shuo-ch'ang tz'u-hua ts'ung-k'an* (Corpus of prosimetric tz'u-hua narratives published in the Ch'eng-hua reign period [1465–87] of the Ming dynasty), 12 *ts'e* (Shanghai: Shanghai Museum, 1973), *ts'e* 12, p. 13b, ll. 9–10; the anonymous Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Chao-shih ku-erh chi* (The story of the orphan of Chao), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 16, *chüan* 2, scene 29, p. 16b, l. 4; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 2, scene 19, p. 8b, l. 2; *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 2, scene 16, p. 19a, ll. 9–10; *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 435, l. 14; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Shuang-chung chi* (The loyal pair), by Yao Mao-liang (15th century), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 33, *chüan* 2, scene 29, p. 20a, l. 10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 44, p. 575, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 10b, l. 11.

50. Variants of these two lines occur ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:441, ll. 13–14; and 2:560, ll. 15–16; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:11, l. 6; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 29, p. 91, ll. 4–5; *Yü-huan chi*, scene 8, p. 27, l. 2; *[Hsin-k'an ch'üan-hsiang] T'ang Hsüeh Jen-kuei k'ua-hai cheng-Liao ku-shih* ([Newly compiled completely illustrated] story of the T'ang [general] Hsüeh Jen-kuei's crossing the sea to subdue Liao[-tung]), originally published in 1471, fac. repr. in *Ming Ch'eng-hua shuo-ch'ang tz'u-hua ts'ung-k'an, ts'e* 3, p. 8b, l. 9; *Sung chin-ch'uan chien yü-chi lun* (Treatise on the loosening of the gold bracelet and the shrinking of jade flesh), included before *chüan* 3 in the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi*, p. 87b, l. 8; and an anonymous song suite in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng* (New songs of a surpassing age), preface dated 1517, fac. repr. (Peking: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing she, 1955), p. 285, l. 12.

51. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a poem written in 818 by Po Chü-i (772–846), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 440, p. 4905, l. 5; *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching*, p. 83a, l. 9; *Chu-tzu yü-lei* (Classified sayings of Master Chu), comp. Li Ching-te (13th century), 8 vols. (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1982), vol. 1, *chüan* 13, p. 8a, l. 4; an anonymous poem quoted in *Ch'i-tung yeh-yü* (Rustic words of a man from eastern Ch'i), by Chou Mi (1232–98), preface dated 1291 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), *chüan* 17, p. 312, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:734, l. 12; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 430, l. 9; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 100a, l. 13; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 43, p. 496, l. 15; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 78, p. 1000, l. 8. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 3a, l. 10.

52. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1749, l. 8; *Shih-wu kuan hsi-yen ch'eng ch'iao-huo*, p. 703, l. 12; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 9, l. 9; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 2, ch. 18, p. 23b, ll. 3–4; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 89, l. 5.

53. It is uncertain whom Wang the Beauty refers to, but this may be a reference to an earlier version of the late vernacular story *Mai-yu lang tu-chan hua-k'uei* (The oil peddler gains sole possession of the queen of flowers), in *Hsing-shih heng-yen*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, pp. 32–69; and Lorraine S. Y. Lieu et al., trans., "The Oil Peddler Courts the Courtesan," in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, ed. Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau (New

York: Columbia University Press, 1978), pp. 177–208. The heroine of this story is a courtesan with a similar professional name who is forced into becoming a singing girl against her will and is initially reluctant to entertain customers.

54. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the collection of literary tales entitled *Hsiao-p'in chi* (Emulative frowns collection), by Chao Pi, author's postface dated 1428 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1957), p. 8, l. 1; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 33, l. 11; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i* (The romance of the chronicles of the T'ang dynasty), by Hsiung Ta-mu (mid-16th century), 8 *chüan* (Chien-yang: Ch'ing-chiang t'ang, 1553), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti-ssu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, fourth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1990), vol. 2, *chüan* 8, p. 30a, l. 5; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 30a, l. 5; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 19a, ll. 12–13; and the collection of literary tales entitled *Mi-teng yin-hua* (Tales told while searching for a lamp), by Shao Ching-chan (16th century), author's preface dated 1592, in *Chien-teng hsin-hua [wai erh-chung]*, p. 329, ll. 10–11.

55. Orthographic variants of this formulaic four-character expression occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1107, l. 12; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 19, p. 44a, l. 8; and the anonymous Ming tsa-chü drama *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi* (Romance in the South Prison), in *Ku-pen Yüan Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 4, scene 2, p. 5a, l. 7.

56. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. I, ch. 20, p. 290, l. 11; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 1, ch. 2, p. 16b, l. 6; and *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 10, p. 33, l. 26.

57. This couplet, which has become proverbial, is derived, with insignificant textual variation, from a poem by Po Chü-i (772–846), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 435, p. 4822, ll. 12–13. It also occurs in *Liu Chih-yüan chu-kung-tiao [chiao-chu]*, part 12, p. 146, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:885, l. 10; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 4, p. 25, l. 3; *Ts'o-jen shih*, p. 216, l. 12; and the middle-period vernacular story *Yüeh-ming Ho-shang tu Liu Ts'ui* (The monk Yüeh-ming converts Liu Ts'ui), in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo*, vol. 2, *chüan* 29, p. 434, l. 5. The second line occurs independently in a lyric by Liu Yung (cs 1034), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:25, lower register, ll. 3–4; a lyric by Ch'ao Pu-chih (1053–1110), ibid., 1:576, lower register, l. 4; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 9, p. 286, l. 4; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1364, l. 3. The couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 71, p. 10a, l. 9.

58. This formulaic four-character expression, which occurs in several orthographic variants, is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 4, p. 92, l. 2; *[Hsin-pien] Wu-tai shih p'ing-hua*, p. 35, l. 9; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 244, l. 14; and *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 3, ch. 11, p. 13b, ll. 5–6.

59. The idea behind this proverbial saying was first expressed by Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18) in a work of poetic admonition addressed to Emperor Ch'eng (r. 33–7 B.C.) of the Han dynasty, entitled *Chiu-chen* (Remonstrance on wine). See *Han-shu* (History of the Former Han dynasty), comp. Pan Ku (32–92), 8 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1962), vol. 8, *chüan* 92, pp. 3712–13; and the translation in Burton Watson, *Early Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), p. 266. A variant of this expression, probably based on a proverbial saying, occurs in a poem by Ch'en Shih-tao (1053–1102). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 19:12654, l. 14; and *Chi-le pien, chüan* 3, p. 117, l. 13. Versions of this expression also occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:159, l. 10; and 4:1416, l. 21; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:78, l. 21; and 3:906, II. 1–2; *Shih-wu kuan hsi-yen ch'eng ch'iao-*

huo, p. 704, l. 5; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 22, p. 68, ll. 1–2; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 104, p. 1600, l. 9.

60. These four lines are metrically defective as they stand, and I have done my best with them rather than attempt any conjectural emendation. They are probably derived from a passage in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 317, ll. 15–16.

61. This couplet is derived from the last two lines of a quatrain by Li Ch'ün-yü (c. 813–c. 861), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 9, *chüan* 570, p. 6608, l. 13. It also occurs in *Chien-teng hsin-hua, chüan* 4, p. 104, l. 3; and *Ming-chu chi*, scene 36, p. 114, l. 6; and recurs, in a variant form, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 12b, l. 8.

62. The Green Dragon of the East and the White Tiger of the West are propitious and unpropitious stellar deities, respectively. This couplet is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 32, p. 152, ll. 13–14; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 20, p. 119, l. 9; Sha-kou chi, scene 35, p. 123, l. 8; the anonymous Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Pai-t'u chi* (The white rabbit), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 19, p. 58, l. 4; *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 2, scene 44, p. 46b, l. 3; the early vernacular story *Chin-ming ch'ih Wu Ch'ing feng Ai-ai* (Wu Ch'ing meets Ai-ai at Chin-ming Pond), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 30, p. 465, l. 8; *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 23, p. 66, l. 12; the middle-period vernacular stories *Ch'en Hsün-chien Mei-ling shih-ch'i chi* (Police chief Ch'en loses his wife in crossing the Mei-ling Range), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 122, l. 14; and *Jen hsiao-tzu lieh-hsing wei shen* (The apotheosis of Jen the filial son), in *Ku-chin hsiao-shuo*, vol. 2, *chüan* 38, p. 580, l. 14; *Chieh-chih-erh chi*, p. 257, l. 13; and *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 1, ch. 4, p. 41b, l. 6. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 14b, l. 11.

CHAPTER 27

1. This four-character expression occurs in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 17, p. 64, l. 7; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 3, ch. 28, p. 25a, ll. 2–3; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 98, p. 1266, l. 12.

2. The proximate source of this poem, with certain modifications in lines 4, 7, and 8, is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 123, ll. 3–4. For a brilliant critical analysis of the rhetoric of this chapter, see Katherine Carlitz, "Puns and Puzzles in the *Chin P'ing Mei*: A Look at Chapter 27," *T'oung Pao* 67, 3–5 (1981), pp. 216–39.

3. Hou Meng (1054–1121) is a historical figure. For his biography, see *Sung shih* (History of the Sung dynasty), comp. T'o-t'o (1313–55) et al., 40 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1977), vol. 32, *chüan* 351, pp. 11113–14.

4. For the General of the Five Ways, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 25. For Chung K'uei, see ibid., chap. 15, n. 8. This formulaic couplet also occurs elsewhere, with slight variations, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 8a, ll. 7–8; and vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 3b, l. 5. The point of the couplet is, of course, that Sung Jen is hopelessly outclassed. It is significant that in these later occurrences it signals the death of Hsi-men Ch'ing and the downfall of Ch'en Ching-chi.

5. The first couplet of this poem is derived from a poem in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 30, p. 464, l. 13.

6. The above passage about the acquisition and manufacture of Hsi-men Ch'ing's birthday gifts for Ts'ai Ching duplicates in much of its wording a passage that has already occurred in chapter 25. See *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 25, pp. 11b–12a. The easiest way to account for this is to assume that the author had tried out inserting this material at

two different places in his draft and had not made up his mind, or had failed to correct the draft, before it left his hands.

7. This couplet, in reverse order, is quoted as proverbial in *T'ien-chia wu-hsing* (The farmer's almanac), comp. Lou Yüan-li (14th century), in *Shuo-fu hsü*, vol. 10, *chüan* 30, p. 11a, l. 6.

8. The "red raven" is a traditional Chinese epithet for the sun. The next two lines are derived from language in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 230, l. 13, and p. 231, l. 3; and the last line is taken verbatim from ibid., vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 426, l. 5. The last line also occurs in *Huai-nan hung-lieh chi-chieh*, vol. 2, *chüan* 14, p. 17b, l. 6; and a lyric by Ts'ao Hsün (1098–1174), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1207, lower register, l. 16. This is a good example of the care with which the author creates his own newly conceived mosaic out of the pre-existing fragments that he has culled from his source texts.

9. Chu-jung is the name of a mythological fire god. See E. T. C. Werner, A *Dictionary of Chinese Mythology* (New York: The Julian Press, 1961), p. 196. The proximate source of this poem is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 230, ll. 15–16, where it is quoted without attribution. It is by the late T'ang poet Wang Ku (cs 898). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 10, *chüan* 694, p. 7987, ll. 1–2. It also occurs without attribution in *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, pp. 53b–54a.

10. This four-character expression occurs in *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 53a, l. 4.

11. The language of the preceding clause occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:897, l. 10.

12. Variants of the last two conceits in this sentence occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:43, l. 15; 2:478, l. 11; and 2:606, l. 16.

13. A variant of this four-character expression occurs in *Wei Chin shih-yü* (Tales of the world of the Wei and Chin dynasties), by Kuo Pan (late 3rd century), as quoted in P'ei Sung-chih's (372–451) commentary to the *San-kuo chih* (History of the Three Kingdoms), comp. Ch'en Shou (233–97), 5 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1973), vol. 3, *chüan* 28, p. 781, l. 11. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Yu-yang tsa-tsu, ch'ien-chi* (first collection), *chüan* 8, p. 78, l. 9; the middle-period vernacular story *Cheng Yüan-ho*, in *Tsui yü-ch'ing* (Superlative delights), preface dated 1647, fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti erh-shih liu chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional fiction, twenty-sixth series) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1991), 4:1436, upper register, ll. 4–5; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 35a, l. 8; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 2, ch. 11, p. 12b, l. 3; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 88, p. 1138, l. 14.

14. For a contemporary description of this highly prized type of rhinoceros horn, see *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu* (Materia medica arranged by categories and topics), by Li Shih-chen (1518–93), 6 vols. (Hong Kong: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1974), vol. 6, *chüan* 51, p. 13, l. 2.

15. Tuan-ch'i was the name of a district in what is now Kwangtung province, the inkstones from which were, and still are, particularly prized. Inkstones from Tuan-ch'i and writing brushes with ivory stems are listed as being among the appurtenances of the private study of Emperor Hui-tsung (r. 1100–25) in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 72, p. 1216, l. 6.

16. Ts'ang Chieh is the name of a mythological figure traditionally credited with the invention of the Chinese script.

17. Ts'ai Yen (fl. 178–206) was the daughter of Ts'ai Yung (132–92), a famous man of letters, who became well-known in her own right as one of China's earliest female poets.

18. The ultimate source of this four-character expression is a letter to Wu Chih (177–230) by Ts'ao P'i (187–226), Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty (r. 220–26), in which he reminisces about the pleasures of summer days they had shared in the past by saying, "We floated sweet melons in the clear stream; and submerged red plums in cold water." See *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 42, p. 8a, l. 4. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in a lyric by Liu Yung (cs 1034), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:45, lower register, 1. 6; a lyric by Li Chung-yüan (fl. early 12th century), ibid., 2:1040, upper register, l. 2; *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 1, p. 2, l. 2; a song by Liu Ping-chung (13th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:14, l. 11; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Hsiu-ju chi* (The embroidered jacket), by Hsü Lin (1462–1538), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 31, p. 85, l. 6; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 19, p. 281, l. 9.

19. This four-character expression occurs in *Tung-yu chi: shang-tung pa-hsien chuan, chüan* 2, p. 5a, l. 1.

20. *The Scripture of the Yellow Court*, or *Huang-t'ing ching*, is an esoteric work of uncertain date which has been preserved in two versions, both probably dating from the Six Dynasties period (222–589). It is the fountainhead of Chinese physiological alchemy in which the human body is treated as a microcosm of the universe, a concept that is not confined to the Taoist school and is utilized in a variety of significant ways throughout the *Chin P'ing Mei*. For important studies of this subject, see Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body*, trans. Karen C. Duval (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); and Joseph Needham and Lu Gwei-djen, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 5, part 5, *Spagyrical Discovery and Invention: Physiological Alchemy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

21. The proximate source of this poem is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 233, l. 10.

22. This four-character expression occurs in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 9, p. 27, l. 10.

23. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1417, l. 7; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 54, p. 620, l. 5; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 1a, l. 9; and ch. 59, p. 3b, l. 3.

24. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the *Ta-chao* (Great summons), in the *Ch'u-tz'u* (Songs of Ch'u), comp. Wang I (d. 158). See *Ch'u-tz'u pu-chu [fu so-yin]* (Songs of Ch'u with supplementary annotation [and a concordance]), comp. Hung Hsing-tsu (1090–1155) (Kyoto: Chūbun shuppan-sha, 1972), *chüan* 10, p. 5b, l. 6. It also occurs in a lyric by Liu Kuo (1154–1206), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:2145, lower register, l. 15; a preface to his own collected lyrics by Wang Yen (1138–1218), in *T'ang Sung tz'u-chi hsü-pa hui-pien* (A compilation of prefaces and colophons to T'ang and Sung lyric collections), comp. Chin Ch'i-hua et al. (N.p.: Chiang-su chiao-yü ch'u-pan she, 1990), p. 170, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1102, l. 10; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 6, p. 14, l. 2; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 60, p. 687, l. 11.

25. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1432, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:388, l. 15; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 28, p. 81, l. 10; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 38, l. 8; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 303, l. 7.

26. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Li Chih-i (fl. late 11th-early 12th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:343, lower register, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1244, l. 15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:375, l. 19; a song by Hu Chih-yü (1227–93), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:67, l. 2; *T'ien-pao i-shih chu-kung-tiao*, p. 244, l. 8; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 17, p. 53, l. 8;

Pai-t'u chi, scene 3, p. 6, l. 9; the fourteenth-century description of the demimonde *Ch'ing-lou chi* (Green bower collection), by Hsia T'ing-chih (c. 1316–c. 1368), in *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chu chi-ch'eng*, 2:32, l. 9; *Hsiang-nang yüan*, scene 4, p. 26b, l. 9; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 33b, l. 9; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 36, p. 114, l. 5; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Yen-chih chi* (The story of the rouge), by Tung Yang-chung (16th century), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 49, *chüan* 2, scene 23, p. 6a, l. 1.

27. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the long sixteenth-century literary tale *T'ien-yüan ch'i-yü* (Celestial destinies remarkably fulfilled), in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, lower register, p. 8b, l. 1; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 94, p. 1062, l. 7.

28. The language of this line and of many of those that follow comes from the *Ju-i chün chuan*, the scurrilous novelette that purports to describe the sexual exploits of the T'ang empress Wu Tse-t'ien (r. 684–705). See ibid., p. 11a, l. 10. The fact that the author of the *Chin P'ing Mei* drew so heavily from this work in composing his erotic scenes is but one fact among many that suggest that he intended the protagonist of his book to be seen as a surrogate for a sovereign.

29. See *Ju-i chün-chuan*, p. 11a, l. 10; and p. 18b, l. 2.

30. It was customary in China for the groom's family to make a present of tea to the family of the bride-to-be as part of the formal betrothal ceremonies.

31. This formulaic four-character expression first occurs in an anecdote describing the fondness of Li Yü (937–78), the last emperor of the Southern T'ang dynasty, for paying visits to houses of prostitution incognito. It is part of an inscription he wrote on a wall while in his cups describing the behavior of the Buddhist monk who has been his temporary host and drinking companion and whose conduct is as dissolute as his own. See *Ch'ing-i lu* (Records of the unusual), attributed to T'ao Ku (903–70), in *Shuo-fu*, vol. 2, *chüan* 61, p. 12b, l. 4. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1325, l. 11; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:386, l. 18; the long literary tale *Chiao Hung chuan* (The story of Chiao-niang and Fei-hung), by Sung Yüan (14th century), in *Ku-tai wen-yen tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo hsüan-chu, erh-chi* (An annotated selection of classic literary tales, second collection), ed. Ch'eng Po-ch'üan (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1984), p. 307, l. 3; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 5, p. 295, l. 4; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 35, p. 99, l. 6; *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 10, p. 25, l. 3; *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 10, p. 56b, l. 5; *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 21, p. 56, l. 9; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 259, l. 11.

32. This song suite is originally from the lost Yüan or early Ming hsi-wen drama *T'ang Po-heng yin-huo chih-fu* (T'ang Po-heng turns misfortune into good fortune). See *Sung Yüan hsi-wen chi-i*, pp. 116–17. The fact that the author of the *Chin P'ing Mei* chose to quote from this play at this point in his story may have ironic significance because in this chapter Hsi-men Ch'ing believes himself to be enjoying good fortune and lords it over his womenfolk, and P'an Chin-lien in particular. But by chapter 79 their roles have been reversed and it is P'an Chin-lien who is the proximate cause of Hsi-men Ch'ing's death. Thus Hsi-men Ch'ing could be said, in contrast to T'ang Po-heng, the protagonist of the quoted play, to have succeeded in turning good fortune into misfortune. This song suite is also preserved independently in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, p. 552; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:264–65; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 3, pp. 61b–62a. For a translation, see appendix, item 4.

33. Variants of these two lines occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1161, l. 10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 25, p. 326, ll. 9–10.

34. This four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 34, p. 448, l. 14.

35. This couplet has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 6a, l. 8. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:120.

36. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Lu Yu (1125–1210), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1600, lower register, l. 14. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1697, l. 17; *P'u-tung Ts'ui Chang chu-yü shih-chi* (Collection of poetic gems about [the affair of] Ts'ui [Ying-ying] and Chang [Chün-jui] in P'u-tung), included as part of the front matter in the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi*, p. 17a, l. 4; *Hsün-ch'in chi*, scene 23, p. 77, l. 1; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 86, ll. 1–2.

37. "Golden Threads" is the name of a famous anonymous ballad on the carpe diem theme that was current at least as early as the ninth century. For the text, see *Yüeh-fu shih-chi* (Collection of Music Bureau ballads), comp. Kuo Mao-ch'ien (12th century), 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), vol. 4, *chüan* 82, p. 1154, l. 5.

38. "Azure funnels" are an invention attributed to one Cheng Ch'üeh of the state of Wei (220–65), who folded large lotus leaves into the shape of funnels and pierced their stems so that wine could be drunk out of them.

39. This four-character expression is derived from a line in a lyric by Su Shih (1037–1101), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:297, lower register, l. 9. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Pao-chien chi*, scene 3, p. 10, l. 6.

40. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 6b, l. 9.

41. This line is taken verbatim from the same lyric by Su Shih identified in note 39 above. See *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:297, ll. 7–8.

42. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 60, p. 5b, l. 5.

43. This chorus is inspired by the closing couplet of a poem attributed to Meng Chang (919–65), the last emperor of the Later Shu dynasty (r. 934–65), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 1, *chüan* 8, p. 80, l. 8; and vol. 12, *chüan* 889, p. 10048, l. 8. The lyric by Su Shih identified in notes 39 and 41 above was also inspired by the same poem, as indicated in his preface. This sequence of three songs is from scene 21 of the *P'i-p'a chi*. See ibid., pp. 126–27; and *The Lute: Kao Ming's P'i-p'a chi*, trans. Jean Mulligan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 171–72. In the original play these songs are sung to celebrate the somewhat tentative lovemaking between Ts'ai Yung (132–92), an upright and conscientious young official who is longing for his first wife, and his second wife, the sensitive daughter of a prime minister, to whom he has been married against his will. For a discussion of the multiple ironies produced by the quotation of these songs at this point in the *Chin P'ing Mei*, see Carlitz, "Puns and Puzzles in the *Chin P'ing Mei:* A Look at Chapter 27," pp. 228–32.

44. This was an ancient Chinese game in which the contestants attempted to toss arrows into a narrow-necked vessel. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 7, n. 14. For an illustrated monograph on this subject, see Isabelle Lee, "Touhu: Three Millennia of the Chinese Arrow Vase and the Game of Pitch-Pot," *Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society* 56 (1991–92): 13–27.

45. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 15a, ll. 4–5.

46. This couplet is from a poem by Chu Shu-chen (fl. 1078–1138), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 28:17950, l. 8.

47. The Pure Empty Hall is the name of a palace on the moon. The Jasper Terrace is a feature of the abode of the Queen Mother of the West.

48. The Crystal Palace is the name of another palace in fairyland.

49. This song is the last from the song suite already quoted from scene 21 of the *P'i-p'a chi* and is followed by the first three lines of the coda. See ibid., p. 127, ll. 4–6; and Mulligan, *The Lute*, p. 172.

50. The second couplet of this poem occurs in virtually the same form in *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 1, scene 5, p. 6b, l. 9. A variant form of the same couplet has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 7b, l. 10. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:201.

51. On "mare teat" grapes, which were first introduced into China in the seventh century, see Edward H. Schafer, *The Golden Peaches of Samarkand: A Study of T'ang Exotics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 142–43. As Schafer points out, these exotic grapes from the Western Regions were cultivated, at least initially, exclusively in the imperial park. This is but one detail of many that serve to hint that Hsi-men Ch'ing's garden is conceived of as a microcosm of the imperial park.

52. The Sweet Springs Palace was the name of an imperial park during the Former Han dynasty. For the significance of this allusion, see the preceding note.

53. This line is derived, with some textual variation, from one in a poem by Li Po (701–62), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 3, *chüan* 166, p. 1715, ll. 8–9. For an English translation of this poem, see *Poems by Li Po*, trans. Elling Eide (Lexington, Kentucky: Anvil Press, 1984), pp. 24–25. The line in question is translated in ibid., p. 25, l. 6.

54. A recipe for this type of wine is included in *Tsun-sheng pa-chien* (Eight disquisitions on nurturing life), by Kao Lien (16th century), author's preface dated 1591 (Ch'eng-tu: Pa-Shu shu-she, 1988), pp. 727–28.

55. The Ch'iao sisters were a pair of famous beauties who married Sun Ts'e (175–200) and Chou Yü (175–210), two of the most prominent men of the Later Han dynasty. They are a favorite subject in the genre of Chinese painting that specializes in imaginary portraits of famous beauties. A painting on this very topic is the subject of a lyric by Ch'in Kuan (1049–1100), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:477, upper register, ll. 6–10.

56. These are fanciful names for some of the configurations resulting from the attempt to throw arrows into a narrow-necked bronze vessel with ears in the game of pitch-pot. They have obviously been chosen for their sexual suggestiveness although I cannot explain precisely what is suggested in every case.

57. A recipe for this type of wine is included in *Tsun-sheng pa-chien*, p. 727.

58. For this somewhat repellent image, see *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 13a, ll. 3–4.

59. The term jade chowrie handle, here used as a euphemism for the penis, is particularly associated with the name of Wang Yen (256–311) because of an anecdote recorded in the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*. See Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, p. 310, item 8. Although Wang Yen ended his career as chief minister and was one of the most prominent men of his time, he has a problematical reputation because his laissez-faire attitude has been held to be largely responsible for the fall of the Western Chin dynasty (265–317), which took place a few years after his death. A well-known quotation from Wang Yen occurs conspicuously on the first page of the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, and I have explained in Appendix I of my translation why I think this evocation of his name was deemed to be significant for the rhetorical purposes of the author. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:429–30.

60. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 13a, ll. 1–2.

61. This striking image is derived from the *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 13b, l. 9, but rendered somewhat more repellent by altering the word "coolies" to the word "loaches."

62. The preceding scamper up to the pavilion on the top of the artificial hill, back down again by way of the winding "sheep's-gut" path and the "waist" of the hill, and terminating with the locked gate figuratively replicates, or parodies, the circulation of the breath in the Taoist body. For a succinct and illuminating analysis of this passage, see Indira Satyendra, "Metaphors of the Body: The Sexual Economy of the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 15 (December 1993): 91.

63. The name of this type of plum, given here as *yü-huang li-tzu* (jade-yellow plum), is more commonly written with the character *yü*, meaning "imperial" rather than "jade." It apparently is intended to pun with the expression *yü-huang li-tzu*, which would mean "the heir established by the Jade Emperor." An orthographic variant of the same expression, written *yü-huang li-tzu* and involving the same pun between the name of a fruit and the designation of the heir apparent, occurs in the anonymous Yüan or early Ming tsa-chü drama entitled *Pao chuang-ho* (Carrying the dressing-case), the plot of which concerns an attempt to do away with the heir apparent. See *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1463, l. 20. Thus in this scene P'an Chin-lien is being symbolically impregnated with imperial heirs, but the exercise proves futile since none of them is permitted to remain in her vagina. Instead it is Li P'ing-erh who bears Hsi-men Ch'ing a son, whom Chin-lien in her jealousy refers to sarcastically as the crown prince. My translation may suggest something of all this subliminally if the words "imperial damson" are understood to pun with the words "imperial damn son," or "imperial dam's son."

64. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 9b, ll. 7–8.

65. This four-character expression, with an insignificant textual variant, occurs twice in the long sixteenth-century literary tale *Hsün-fang ya-chi* (Elegant vignettes of fragrant pursuits), the protagonist of which resembles Hsi-men Ch'ing in his unrelenting pursuit of sexual gratification with multiple partners. See ibid., in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang*, vol. 2, *chüan* 4, lower register, p. 8b, l. 3; and p. 39b, l. 11. The same expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 50, p. 10b, ll. 5–6; vol. 4, ch. 67, p. 18b, ll. 6–7; and ch. 79, p. 7a, l. 5. The recurrences of this expression in chapters 50 and 79 are particularly significant because in the first instance it occurs while Hsi-men Ch'ing is trying out his newly acquired aphrodisiac on the unwilling person of Li P'ing-erh, who is in her menstrual period, an act which leads to her death, and in the second case it occurs while Hsi-men Ch'ing is engaged in the first of the two back-to-back bouts of sexual acrobatics that result in his death from sexual overindulgence.

66. This device, which was alleged to generate heat if rubbed and thus serve to stimulate one's sexual partner, is mentioned in *Tsun-sheng pa-chien*, p. 784, l. 6; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 54, l. 4.

67. This idiomatic expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 30, p. 346, l. 9.

68. An aphrodisiac with a somewhat similar name is mentioned in *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 54, l. 3.

69. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 11a, l. 6.

70. See ibid., p. 13a, l. 7.

71. The last clause of this sentence is derived from ibid., p. 13b, l. 6.

72. These two sentences are derived from ibid., p. 11a, ll. 7–9.

73. See ibid., p. 9b, ll. 7–8.

74. See ibid., p. 16b, l. 5.

75. Even this inconsequential expression is taken verbatim from ibid., p. 14a, l. 2.

76. These two lines are taken verbatim from ibid., p. 13b, ll. 5–6. They are repeated by Hsi-men Ch'ing after his fatal sexual bout with P'an Chin-lien in chapter 79, a passage of arms in which their roles have been significantly reversed. See *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 9b, ll. 9–10. For a translation of this passage, see David T. Roy, trans., "Selections from *Jin Ping Mei*," *Renditions* 24 (Autumn 1985): 58–62.

77. Golden Valley was the name of the country villa of Shih Ch'ung (249–300), a man whose wealth and fondness for ostentation has made his name proverbial for those qualities. See Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, p. 264, item 57, note 1.

78. This poem, with a few minor variants, recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 58, p. 11b, ll. 5–6; and vol. 5, ch. 97, p. 12a, ll. 3–4.

CHAPTER 28

1. This line has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 1a, l. 3. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:253, ll. 8–9.

2. This couplet has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 21, p. 17b, l. 1. The poem in its entirety occurs in *Ming-hsin Pao-chien, chüan* 1, p. 11b, ll. 5–7.

3. This four-character expression occurs in *Shih-hou chi*, scene 2, p. 2, l. 10.

4. This four-character expression occurs in *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 15a, l. 5; and in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 60, p. 694, l. 9.

5. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 14a, l. 4.

6. See ibid., p. 9a, l. 1.

7. See ibid., p. 18b, l. 4.

8. This couplet recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 12b, l. 8; and vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 9a, ll. 3–4. In the latter instance it occurs in the course of the description of the sexual bout with P'an Chin-lien, which proves fatal to Hsi-men Ch'ing.

9. See *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 12b, l. 6.

10. See ibid., p. 10b, l. 5.

11. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:147, ll. 12–13.

12. This line has already occurred twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 8b, l. 5; and ch. 17, p. 2a, l. 9. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:203, ll. 31–32; and 1:339, ll. 23–24.

13. This four-character expression occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 38a, l. 5.

14. The six Ting gods are Taoist deities named for the six stem-branch combinations, beginning with the stem *ting* in the sexagenary cycle. If you know the right formulas, they can be made to fetch whatever you may desire from any distance, or perform other feats of magic. See Ma Shu-t'ien, *Hua-hsia chu-shen* (The various gods of China) (Peking: Pei-ching Yen-shan ch'u-pan she, 1990), pp. 149–51.

15. The proximate source of this couplet is the last two lines of a lyric in *Chiao Hung chuan*, p. 294, l. 15, where it also describes the mysterious disappearance of a woman's shoe. The second line is derived, with some textual variation, from the last line of a quatrain by Li Kuei-t'ang, *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 11, *chüan* 778, p. 8804, l. 10. Variants of this line also occur in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 34, p. 104, l. 11; and *Liu sheng mi Lien chi, chüan* 3, p. 1b, ll. 7–8.

16. This *hsieh-hou yü* recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 60, p. 1a, l. 11.

17. For the legend of the annual meeting on the seventh day of the seventh month between the Weaving Maid and her lover the Herd Boy, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 40. It was a folk belief that on this day the Weaving Maid conferred dexterity in threading needles on young girls. The term "threading needles" also has the derived meaning of "to bring lovers together," or "to pander." The sardonic point of these lines is that the Weaving Maid would be far too preoccupied with her own assignation to do any such thing. These two lines are derived, with some textual variation, from the final couplet of a poem by Lo Yin (833–909), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 10, *chüan* 663, p. 7601, l. 11. This couplet is also quoted without attribution in *Chien-teng hsin-hua, chüan* 4, p. 103, l. 9; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 5a, l. 7.

18. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 24, p. 279, l. 8; and ch. 31, p. 349, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 44, p. 6a, l. 7.

19. This four-character expression recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 31, p. 8a, l. 9; and vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 9b, l. 8.

20. A variant form of this proverbial couplet occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 89, p. 1013, l. 11; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 71, p. 916, l. 15.

21. This idiomatic expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., the novel *Pei Sung chih-chuan* (Chronicle of the Sung conquest of the North), attributed to Hsiung Ta-mu (mid-16th century), 10 *chüan* (Nanking: Shih-te t'ang, 1593), fac. repr. in *Ku-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ti san-shih ssu chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 2, p. 21a, ll. 3–4; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 42, l. 7; ch. 14, p. 159, l. 16; and ch. 17, p. 192, l. 9; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 301, l. 4.

22. This expression occurs in *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 4, wedge before scene 1, p. 140, l. 8.

23. This is a famous scene from *Hsi-hsiang chi*, in which the love-smitten Chang Chün-jui eavesdrops on Ts'ui Ying-ying while she is burning evening incense and exchanges the poems with her that serve to initiate their love affair. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 1, scene 3, pp. 32–35; and West and Idema, *The Moon and the Zither*, pp. 201–209. An illustration of this scene occupies the upper third of pp. 49b–50a in the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi*.

24. According to Chinese folklore, there is a three-legged toad in the moon. This creature is alluded to again in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 4b, l. 4.

25. Variants of this four-character expression occur in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk I-chung (781–872), *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 282, l. 9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1576, l. 14; the cycle of four tsa-chü plays entitled *Ssu-sheng yüan* (Four cries of a gibbon), by Hsü Wei (1521–93), originally published in 1588, ed. and annot. Chou Chung-ming (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1984), play no. 1, p. 4, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 259, II. 5–6.

26. The Avici Hell is the last and the deepest of the eight hot hells in popular Buddhist lore.

27. Variants of this imprecation occur in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 82, p. 935, l. 15; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 43, p. 557, l. 1.

28. Variants of this sentiment recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 62, p. 1b, l. 11; and ch. 63, p. 3a, l. 9.

29. This couplet, with some textual variation, recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua, vol* 4, ch. 77, p. 11a, ll. 9–10.

30. This quatrain occurs verbatim in *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 10, ch. 93, p. 9b, ll. 1–2.

CHAPTER 29

1. This poem, with considerable textual variation, occurs at the beginning of some editions of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*. See ibid., vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 1a, ll. 10–13.

2. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 2b, l. 10.

3. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2b, p. 114, l. 14; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 46, l. 3.

4. A variant of this four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:1, l. 9.

5. This idiomatic expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:4, l. 20; and 3:887, l. 17; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 46, p. 768, l. 17; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 74, p. 851, l. 16.

6. This proverbial saying occurs in *Shuang-chung chi, chüan* 2, scene 35, p. 29b, ll. 6–7. Variant versions also occur in *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 9, p. 434, l. 15; *Ching-chung chi*, scene 18, p. 49, l. 1; and *Han-tan meng chi*, scene 29, p. 2416, l. 4.

7. This proverbial expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 1a, l. 5.

8. Variants of this line occur in passages describing a Taoist priest in *Shui-hu ch'üan chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 220, l. 11; *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 1, ch. 1, p. 3a, l. 7; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 3, ch. 28, p. 21b, l. 10.

9. This couplet occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 53, p. 882, l. 16. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 66, p. 4a, ll. 8–9.

10. This formulaic couplet occurs in *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 3, ch. 28, p. 21b, l. 11; and, in reversed order, in the early vernacular story *Hsi-hu san-t'a chi* (The three pagodas at West Lake), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 30, l. 14; and *Ch'en Hsün-chien Mei-ling shih-ch'i chi*, p. 133, l. 11. The first line also occurs independently in the early vernacular story *Lo-yang san-kuai chi* (The three monsters of Lo-yang), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 74, l. 10.

11. Variants of these four lines occur in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 5a, l. 6; *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 1, ch. 1, p. 3a, ll. 8–9; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 57, p. 735, l. 5.

12. On Hsü Tzu-p'ing, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 12, n. 49.

13. The *Dragon canon*, or *Lung-ching*, is an abbreviated reference to several works on geomancy that contain this term in their titles and that are doubtfully attributed to Yang Yün-sung (late 9th century). For a succinct discussion of Chinese geomancy, see Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), chap. 4, pp. 131–71.

14. The Five Planetary Features is a term used by physiognomists who correlate the five planets—Mars, Saturn, Jupiter, Venus, and Mercury—with the five phases—fire, earth, wood, metal, and water—and with the forehead, nose, right ear, left ear, and mouth. See *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 632, pp. 26b–27b; and William A. Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination: Its Forms, Affinities, and Functions* (Los Angeles: United World, 1968), pp. 44–47.

15. The Three Fates is a Han dynasty concept that divided human fate into three categories that might be translated as Allotted Fate, Deserved Fate, and Contingent Fate.

See Chao Wei-pang, “The Chinese Science of Fate-Calculation,” *Folklore Studies* 5 (1946): 281.

16. Ch’en T’uan (895–989) is a historical figure who played a significant role in Chinese philosophy but has also become a magus figure in popular lore, associated with numerology, physiognomy, and other occult arts. For his biography, see *Sung shih*, vol. 38, *chüan* 457, pp. 13420–22; and A *Compilation of Anecdotes of Sung Personalities*, comp. Ting Ch’uan-ching, trans. Chu Djang and Jane C. Djang (N.p.: St. John’s University Press, 1989), pp. 180–85.

17. Yen Chün-p’ing (fl. 1st century B.C.) is a historical figure who made his living by fortune-telling in the market of Ch’eng-tu but closed his door every day as soon as he had earned his sustenance and devoted himself to giving instruction in Taoism. He is reputed to have been the teacher of the famous Confucian scholar Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.–A.D. 18). For his biography, see *Han-shu*, vol. 7, *chüan* 72, pp. 3056–58. A similar set-piece of parallel prose describing a fortune-teller that shares some of the language and structure of the above passage occurs in *San hsien-shen Pao Lung-t’u tuan-yüan*, p. 170. ll. 3–4.

18. This formulaic four-character expression occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., the fifteenth-century tsa-chü drama *Cho Wen-chün ssu-pen Hsiang-ju* (Cho Wen-chün elopes with [Ssu-ma] Hsiang-ju), by Chu Ch’üan (1378–1448), in *Ming-jen tsa-chü hsüan*, scene 2, p. 120, l. 10; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 5, p. 10, l. 11; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 20, p. 55, l. 5; *Ming-feng chi*, scene 2, p. 3, l. 7; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 174, ll. 6–7; and *San-pao t’ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t’ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 142, l. 10.

19. There happens to be a sixteenth-century Ming figure of the same name, the eldest son of a prominent official named Wu K’uan (1435–1504), but little else is known about him. See *Ming shih* (History of the Ming dynasty), comp. Chang T’ing-yü (1672–1755) et al., 28 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), vol. 16, *chüan* 184, p. 4884, l. 14.

20. There is a work entitled *Shih-san chia hsiang-shu* (The thirteen schools of physiognomy) listed in *Kuo-shih ching-chi chih* (Bibliography for the [Ming] dynastic history), comp. Chiao Hung (1541–1620), first printed in 1602, in *Ming shih i-wen chih, pu-pien, fu-pien* (Bibliographical treatise of the History of the Ming dynasty, with supplementary material, and appended material), 2 vols. (Peking: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1959), vol. 2, p. 1059, upper register, ll. 1–2. Hsü Tzu-p’ing’s name, however, is usually associated with astrology rather than physiognomy.

21. The Hemp-robed Master is the name of a shadowy figure who was allegedly an older contemporary of Ch’en T’uan (895–989) and who is popularly believed to have been a master of physiognomy. See *Shao-shih wen-chien lu* (Record of things heard and seen by Mr. Shao), by Shao Po-wen (1056–1134), author’s preface dated 1132 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), *chüan* 7, p. 70, ll. 10–14; and Djang and Djang, A *Compilation of Anecdotes of Sung Personalities*, p. 162. There is a work of this name, compiled by Pao Li-chih (fl. late 15th century), listed in the bibliographical treatise of the *Ming shih*. See ibid., vol. 8, *chüan* 98, p. 2443, lower register, l. 9. A work of this title is still popular among physiognomists today and is available in numerous editions.

22. This method of fortune-telling, which is at least as old as the Han dynasty, involves the rotation of discs marked with the celestial stems, terrestrial branches, and their correlates, so as to produce a total of 720 possible combinations, which are then interpreted according to the oracular statements associated with each.

23. An orthographic variant of this four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 49, p. 570, l. 17. It recurs in the *Chin P’ing Mei tz’u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 79, p. 18b, l. 6; and

vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 7a, ll. 1–2.

24. As pointed out in Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 12, n. 48, although the fortune-telling jargon employed here and elsewhere in the novel is quite authentic, the horoscopes provided for the characters are calendrically impossible, which suggests that the author did not intend his readers to take them too seriously. That this is the case would have been apparent to any reader with a rudimentary knowledge of the Chinese calendrical system, and the anonymous commentator on the B edition of the novel actually calls attention to this fact in an upper margin comment at this point in the text. See *[Hsin-k'o hsiu-hsiang p'i-p'ing] Chin P'ing Mei* ([Newly cut illustrated commentarial edition] of the *Chin P'ing Mei*), 2 vols. (Chi-nan: Ch'i-Lu shu-she, 1989), vol. 1, ch. 29, p. 373.

25. These two lines correspond, with insignificant textual variation, to the first couplet in a quatrain, quoted as being from an old verse, in *San-ming t'ung-hui* (Comprehensive compendium on the three fates), comp. Wan Min-ying (cs 1550), in *[Ying-yin Wen-yüan ko] Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* ([Facsimile reprint of the Wen-yüan ko Imperial Library copy of the] Complete library of the four treasuries), 1, 500 vols. (Taipei: T'aiwan Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1986), vol. 810, *chüan* 5, p. 82b, ll. 5–6.

26. For an explanation of this terminology, see Chao Wei-pang, "The Chinese Science of Fate-Calculation," pp. 292–94.

27. For an explanation of this term, see ibid., pp. 297–98.

28. The text here reads *shang-kuan* (injurer of the official), but I have emended it to *p'ien-kuan* (one-sided official) in order to bring it into conformity with the horoscopic system, as I understand it.

29. The text here reads *ch'ou* rather than *jen*, but I have emended it in order to make sense of the passage. There is sufficient graphic similarity between the two characters to make it probable that this is one of the innumerable orthographical errors that mar the text.

30. This four-character expression occurs in *San-ming t'ung-hui, chüan* 1, p. 65b, l. 6.

31. This four-character expression occurs in ibid., p. 62a, l. 1.

32. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 7a, l. 4.

33. This four-character expression occurs twice in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 642, p. 23a, l. 8; and *chüan* 644, p. 6a, l. 6.

34. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature and usually occurs in descriptions of the nuptial chamber. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:147, l. 12; 2:533, l. 2; 2:810, l. 13; and 2:824, l. 4; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:353, l. 4; 2:460, l. 10; and 2:677, l. 3.

35. For a hint as to the significance of this statement, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:91, ll. 5–6. There is a good deal of double entendre in this passage, which is likely to escape notice on a first reading.

36. This stem-branch combination does not conform to the time scheme of the novel. The events of this chapter take place in the sixth month of the year 1116, while the nearest *ting-wei* year is 1127. Since the character *ting* plays a significant role in the fortune-teller's interpretation, I cannot think of any way to emend the text satisfactorily.

37. Although the relationship between *ting* and *jen* is said to be "harmonious," it is also a portent of lasciviousness and impurity. See *San-ming t'ung-hui, chüan* 2, p. 86b.

38. For this definition, see ibid., *chüan* 5, p. 2a, l. 1.

39. These two astrological terms, which are popularly thought to portend a fruitful marriage, are mentioned together in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1504, l. 20; and 4:1541, l. 9; the anonymous Ming tsa-chü drama *Chang Yü-hu wu-su nü-chen kuan* (Chang Yü-hu mistakenly spends the night in a Taoist nunnery), in *Ming-jen tsa-chü hsüan*, scene 2, p. 608, l. 14; *San-yüan chi*, scene 25, p. 69, l. 6; *Huan-sha chi*, scene 17, p. 60, l. 4; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 30, l. 8.

40. The ultimate source of this four-character expression is stanzas 6 and 7 of song no. 189 in the *Shih-ching* (Book of songs). See *Mao-shih yin-te* (Concordance to the Mao version of the *Book of Songs*) (Tokyo: Japan Council for East Asian Studies, 1962), song no. 189, p. 42; and *The Book of Songs*, trans. Arthur Waley (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954), p. 283, where the relevant passage is translated:

> 'Your lucky dreams, what were they?'
> 'They were of black bears and brown…'
> The diviner thus interprets it:
> 'Black bears and brown
> Mean men-children.'

41. For an explanation of this term, see Chao Wei-pang, "The Chinese Science of Fate-Calculation," p. 306.

42. These four lines, with occasional variants, are quoted four times in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 12b, ll. 3–4; p. 19a, ll. 8–9; *chüan* 634, p. 28a, l. 9; and *chüan* 637, p. 4a, ll. 5–6. In the second of these references they are attributed to Ch'en T'uan (895–989), and in the fourth to the Hemp-robed Master, who was allegedly an elder contemporary of his. See note 21 above. They are also quoted as being proverbial in *Ch'ing-hsiang tsa-chi* (Miscellaneous records from the black box), by Wu Ch'u-hou (cs 1053), author's preface dated 1087 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1985), *chüan* 4, p. 38, l. 2; occur without attribution in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 1, p. 10b, ll. 2–3; and occur in slightly variant form in *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 1:30, ll. 10–11. The second and fourth lines, with one insignificant variant, recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 10b, l. 5.

43. This line, and many of those that follow, is derived from a work entitled *Shen-i fu* (Rhapsody on the divine wonders [of physiognomy]), attributed to Ch'en T'uan (895–989), included in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 636, pp. la–54a. See ibid., p. 4b, l. 6. It also occurs elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 8b, l. 3; *chüan* 639, p. 13a, l. 7; and p. 37b, ll. 8–9; *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 12, p. 27b, l. 9; and *T'ien-yüan ch'i-yü*, vol. 3, *chüan* 7, p. 15b, ll. 3–4.

44. See *Shen-i fu*, p. 3a, l. 3; and *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 8a, l. 9; and *chüan* 639, p. 13a, l. 6. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 8a, l. 2.

45. This couplet, with one variant, is derived from *Shen-i fu*, p. 5a, l. 1. The first line of the couplet also occurs elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 8b, ll. 3 and 6–7; *chüan* 636, p. 26b, l. 9; and *chüan* 641, p. 2a, l. 6. The second line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 8a, ll. 2–3.

46. This line is probably derived from the commentary on *Shen-i fu*, p. 44a, l. 2.

47. For the first line of this couplet, see ibid., p. 25b, l. 5. The point of the couplet is also stated, with some textual variation, in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 21a, l. 9.

48. This couplet is derived from *Shen-i fu*, p. 10b, l. 4.

49. This couplet is from ibid., p. 5b, l. 5. It also occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 639, p. 13b, l. 3.

50. This couplet is probably derived from the commentary on the preceding two lines in *Shen-i fu*, p. 5b, ll. 8–9.

51. This couplet is from ibid., p. 25b, l. 8. The first line of the couplet also occurs elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 38b, l. 7.

52. This couplet is from *Shen-i fu*, p. 27b, l. 5.

53. This couplet is from ibid., l. 9.

54. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 13b, l. 5. It is also quoted in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 193, l. 14.

55. For this couplet, see *Shen-i fu*, p. 32b, ll. 4–5. The concluding four characters in the second line of this couplet also occur in the commentary on ibid., p. 39b, l. 8.

56. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 33a, l. 8.

57. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 34a, l. 1. One can only assume that this is a joke at Hsi-men Ch'ing's expense, since Immortal Wu has not been offered the opportunity to inspect this part of his anatomy.

58. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 3b, l. 8. The first line of this couplet also occurs in ibid., p. 49a, l. 7; and elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 46a, l. 5.

59. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 49b, l. 1.

60. These four lines are from ibid., p. 41a, l. 5. The first line occurs independently in *Lu-shan Yüan-kung hua*, p. 175, ll. 15–16; *Ta-T'ang San-tsang ch'ü-ching shih-hua* (Prosimetric account of how the monk Tripitaka of the great T'ang [made a pilgrimage] to procure sutras), printed in the thirteenth century but probably older (Shanghai: Chung-kuo ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), episode 11, p. 26, l. 3; *Kuan-shihyin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching*, p. 4a, ll. 2–3; *Hsiao-p'in chi*, p. 51, l. 8; *Yüeh-ming Ho-shang tu Liu Ts'ui*, p. 433, l. 15; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 91, l. 5; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 7, l. 7; and elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 50a, l. 9; and *chüan* 633, p. 23b, l. 3. The second line occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:699, l. 2.

61. For this couplet, see *Shen-i fu*, p. 38b, l. 8. The first line of this couplet is missing from the text of the novel, but a four-character phrase is required by the rhythm of the parallel prose. I have, therefore, supplied it conjecturally, because the following line in *Shen-i fu* approximates the sense of the next line in the novel.

62. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., l. 5; and recurs, with some textual variation, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 9b, l. 5. The first line of the couplet also occurs elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 15b, l. 2; and p. 21a, l. 9.

63. This couplet is derived, with one insignificant textual variant, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 40b, l. 1.

64. These two couplets are derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 41a, ll. 8–9. The four characters of the first line also occur in a different order in ibid., p. 37a, l. 5.

65. This four-character expression occurs in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 31, p. 110, l. 2; and *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 639, p. 7a, l. 2; *chüan* 641, p. 4b, l. 1; and p. 18a, l. 9.

66. The proximate source of this quatrain, with some textual variation, is the first four lines of an anonymous text entitled *Nü-jen ko* (Song on women), in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 15a, ll. 1–2.

67. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-i fu*, p. 37b, l. 4; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 29, p. 9a, l. 1.

68. This four-character expression occurs in reversed order in *Shen-i fu*, p. 40a, l. 6.

69. These four lines are derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 11a, l. 8. The last line also occurs in the same form as in the novel in *San-ming t'ung-hui, chüan* 1, p. 73a, l. 5; and p. 75a, ll. 6–7.

70. These two lines are probably derived, with considerable textual variation, from a passage in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 3a, ll. 5–7.

71. These two lines occur verbatim in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 4b, l. 3; and, with some insignificant textual variation, in ibid., p. 13b, ll. 6–7.

72. These two lines occur verbatim in *Shen-i fu*, p. 3a, l. 3; and elsewhere in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 8a, l. 9; and *chüan* 639, p. 13a, l. 6. The first line also occurs independently in ibid., *chüan* 636, p. 11b, ll. 5–6; and *chüan* 641, p. 15a, l. 8; and in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 42, p. 484, l. 6.

73. For an illustration and definitions of the facial features designated "three sections" and "six treasuries," see Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination*, pp. 42–43.

74. The language of these two lines is probably derived, with considerable textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 12a, l. 7, and the following few lines of commentary.

75. The terms "lunar comet" and "palace of longevity" refer to the areas between the eyes and between the eyebrows, respectively. See the illustrations in Lessa, *Chinese Body Divination*, pp. 46 and 49. These four lines are derived, with insignificant textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 31a, l. 9.

76. This couplet occurs verbatim in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 4a, ll. 3–4. The four-character expression at the beginning of the first couplet also occurs independently in ibid., *chüan* 631, p. 49a, l. 9; p. 54b, ll. 7–8; *chüan* 633, p. 8a, l. 9; and p. 22b, l. 8.

77. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-i fu*, p. 38a, l. 8.

78. This couplet occurs verbatim in ibid., p. 38b, l. 5.

79. This four-character expression occurs independently in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 634, p. 8b, l. 9; *chüan* 638, p. 23b, ll. 7–8; and *chüan* 639, p. 9a, l. 3.

80. This four-character expression, with an insignificant textual variant, occurs in *Shen-i fu*, p. 31a, l. 2.

81. This four-character expression occurs in the commentary to ibid., p. 15a, ll. 7–8.

82. This four-character expression occurs as early as the fourth century in a statement attributed to Wang Hsi-chih (321–79). See *Shih-shuo hsin-yü chiao-chien* (A critical edition of the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*), ed. Yang Yung (Hong Kong: Ta-chung shu-chü, 1969), ch. 14, item 26, p. 475, l. 1; and Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, p. 314. It occurs independently in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 47b, l. 6; p. 54b, l. 7; *chüan* 633, p. 8a, l. 9; and *chüan* 638, p. 26a, l. 7.

83. A very similar line, with some textual variation, occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 26a, l. 5.

84. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1304, l. 4; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 8, ch. 69, p. 15a, l. 1; and the Ming novel *Yang chia fu shih-tai chung-yung yen-i chih-chuan* (Popular chronicle of the generations of loyal and brave exploits of the Yang household), preface dated 1606, 2 vols., fac. repr. (Taipei: Kuo-li chung-yang t'u-shu kuan, 1971), vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 27b, l. 1.

85. These four lines are derived, with some textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 39a, l. 4.

86. These four lines, with some textual variation, are derived from ibid., p. 41a, l. 1.

87. These two lines occur verbatim in ibid., p. 39b, l. 6.

88. These two lines occur verbatim in ibid., p. 9b, l. 8.

89. These two lines are derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 10a, l. 2.

90. These four lines are derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 14a, l. 9.

91. This formulaic warning occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 14b, l. 9; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 23, p. 1081, l. 19; and *Shuang-ch'ing pi-chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, lower register, p. 25b, l. 1.

92. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 38, p. 610, ll. 5–6.

93. This quatrain is derived, with some textual variation, from a poem on persons with the characteristics of the peacock in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 25b, II. 8–9.

94. The ultimate source of this four-character expression is two lines in the first stanza of song no. 165 in the *Book of Songs*, which Arthur Waley translates, "Leave the dark valley,/ Mount to the high tree." See *Mao-shih yin-te*, p. 35, no. 165, l. 1; and Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 204, ll. 11–12. It also occurs in a poem by Lu Chao (cs 843), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 9, *chüan* 551, p. 6384, l. 12; a lyric by Wang Chih-tao (1093–1169), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1140, lower register, l. 6; and *Su Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi, chüan* 1, scene 10, p. 20a, l. 3.

95. These two lines occur verbatim in *Shen-i fu*, p. 5a, l. 7.

96. This line occurs in ibid., p. 26b, l. 2.

97. This four-character expression occurs in *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 3, p. 7, ll. 10–11.

98. The four deformities are defined, with some textual variation, in the commentary to *Shen-i fu*, p. 26b, ll. 3–4; and *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 21b, ll. 1–2.

99. This couplet occurs verbatim in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 13b, ll. 3–4.

100. This line occurs verbatim in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 18b, l. 3.

101. This line occurs verbatim in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 3a, ll. 6–7; and, with one significant variant, in ibid., p. 13b, l. 1.

102. These two lines are derived, with some textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 42b, l. 9.

103. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 638, p. 24a, l. 7. Variants also occur in ibid., *chüan* 641, p. 6a, l. 7; and in the commentary on *Shen-i fu*, p. 14b, l. 8.

104. These two lines are derived, with some textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 12b, l. 9.

105. This quatrain is derived, with some textual variation, from a poem on persons with the characteristics of the rat in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 32b, l. 9–p. 33a, l. 1.

106. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 22a, l. 4. Not only the feet of young girls, but sometimes also the hands, were bound before the girls went to bed at night in order to make them small and dainty. According to the *Hsü Chin P'ing Mei* (Sequel to the *Chin P'ing Mei*), by Ting Yao-k'ang (1599–1669), preface dated 1660, this was also done to prevent them from masturbating. See ibid., in *Chin P'ing Mei hsü-shu san-chung* (Three sequels to the *Chin P'ing Mei)*, 2 vols. (Chi-nan: Ch'i-Lu shu-she, 1988), vol. 1, ch. 53, p. 522.

107. The "five governing features" are defined as the ears, eyebrows, eyes, nose, and mouth in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 632, p. 1b, ll. 1–2.

108. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-i fu*, p. 16b, l. 7. It also occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:518, l. 6; 3:829, l. 3; and *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan*

1, p. 12b, ll. 6–7.

109. These four lines are derived, with some textual variation, from *Shen-i fu*, p. 39a, l. 7.

110. These two lines are derived, with some textual variation, from ibid., p. 38b, l. 8.

111. The left eye symbolizes the father and the right eye the mother. See *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 633, p. 33b, ll. 4–5.

112. Variants of this line occur in *Shen-i fu*, p. 36b, l. 1; and *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 21b, l. 1.

113. The "heavenly treasuries" and "earthly storehouses" of the human face correspond roughly to the temples and the jowls.

114. This line occurs verbatim as the last line of a quatrain on persons with the characteristics of the cat in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 641, p. 35b, l. 7.

115. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Sui-t'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 5, p. 40a, l. 2; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 49, p. 17a, l. 3.

116. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a poem by Su Shih (1037–1101), *Su Shih shih-chi*, vol. 8, *chüan* 49, p. 2731, l. 5; a poem by Fan Ch'eng-ta (1126–93), *Fan Shih-hu chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 25, p. 350, l. 3; and *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 29, p. 89, l. 11.

117. A variant of this expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 49, p. 17a, l. 3.

118. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 1, scene 2, p. 18, l. 4; *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 2, scene 29, p. 15b, l. 3; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 37, p. 120, l. 4; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 62, p. 1046, l. 11; *Ming-feng chi*, scene 7, p. 28, l. 4, and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 130, l. 3.

119. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 10, p. 296, l. 7; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 37, p. 121, l. 3; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 8, p. 359, l. 7; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 64a, l. 11; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 63, p. 719, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 31, p. 399, l. 9.

120. This couplet is derived, with one insignificant textual variant, from a poem attributed to Lü Tung-pin (9th century), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 12, *chüan* 856, p. 9681, l. 4. A variant of the first line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 49, p. 17a, ll. 7–8.

121. This proverbial couplet recurs in ibid., ch. 46, p. 18a, ll. 7–8.

122. The four-character expression that concludes this line recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 15b, l. 3.

123. This four-character phrase occurs in a lyric by Kuan Chien (12th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1574, lower register, l. 3; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 52b, l. 3; and *Su Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi, chüan* 2, scene 30, p. 20b, l. 6.

124. This four-character expression occurs in *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 33b, l. 2; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 17, p. 191, l. 11.

125. This quatrain is by Kao P'ien (d. 887), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 9, *chüan* 598, p. 6921, l. 4. It also occurs without attribution in *Kao-feng Yüan-miao Ch'an-shih yü-lu* (Recorded sayings of the Ch'an Master Kao-feng Yüan-miao [1238–95]), in *Hsü Tsang-ching* (Continuation of the Buddhist canon), 150 vols., fac. repr. (Hong Kong: Hsiang-kang ying-yin *Hsü Tsang-ching* wei-yüan hui, 1967), vol. 122, *chüan* 2, p. 344b, upper register, ll. 3–4; and *Ta-T'ang Ch'in-wang tz'u-hua* (Prosimetric story of the Prince of Ch'in of the Great

T'ang), 2 vols., fac. repr. of early 17th century ed. (Peking: Wen-hsüeh ku-chi k'an-hsing she, 1956), vol. 2, *chüan* 5, ch. 38, p. 51a, ll. 4–5.

126. This quatrain is derived, with some textual variation, from one by Su Shun-ch'in (1008–49), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 6:3938, l. 14.

127. This proverbial couplet occurs in the *T'ai-kung chia-chiao* (Family teachings of T'ai-kung), in Chou Feng-wu, *Tun-huang hsieh-pen T'ai-kung chia-chiao yen-chiu* (A study of the Tun-huang manuscripts of the *T'ai-kung chia-chiao*) (Taipei: Ming-wen shu-chü, 1986), p. 19, l. 14. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:518, l. 11; and *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 21, p. 63, l. 2. Variants also occur in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 2a, l. 6, where it is attributed to T'ai-kung; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 25, p. 74, l. 5; *[Hsin-pien] Liu Chih-yüan huan-Hsiang Pai-t'u chi*, p. 19b, l. 12; *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 2, scene 12, p. 4a, l. 8; and *chüan* 4, scene 41, p. 18b, ll. 8–9; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Shuang-lieh chi* (The heroic couple), by Chang Ssu-wei (late 16th century), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 12, p. 32, l. 8; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 62, p. 716, ll. 9–10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 305, l. 8. A variant of the first line also occurs independently in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 140, l. 11.

128. This proverbial saying occurs in a song lyric by Hsüeh Lun-tao (c. 1531–c. 1600), *Ming-tai ko-ch'ü hsüan*, p. 105, ll. 25–26. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 8a, l. 9.

129. A variant of this formulaic expression, which is of Buddhist origin, occurs in *Lu-shan Yüan-kung hua*, p. 184, l. 8. It occurs as it does in the novel in *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu* (The recorded sayings of layman Ju-ju), by Yen Ping (d. 1212), preface dated 1194, xerox copy of manuscript in the Kyoto University Library, *i-chi* (secohd collection), *chüan* 2, p. 5b, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:622, ll. 13–14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:888, l. 14; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 42, p. 679, l. 4. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 58, p. 10a, l. 4.

130. This four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Nan-t'o ch'u-chia yüan-ch'i* (Legend of how Sundarananda became a monk), in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 1:399, l. 10; *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching*, p. 119a, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:719, l. 2; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 65, p. 742, l. 7.

131. These are traditional subject categories in Chinese painting.

132. A variant of this formulaic four-character expression occurs in a similar context in *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 16a, l. 2. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 4a, l. 3.

133. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 79, p. 1019, ll. 10 and 15; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 32, p. 9a, l. 2.

134. This entire episode in which Hsi-men Ch'ing initiates intercourse with P'an Chin-lien while she is asleep is derived, conceptually as well as verbally, from a passage in *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 16b, ll. 2–5.

135. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 23, p. 266, l. 2; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 21a, l. 2.

136. This four-character expression occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 34a, l. 9.

137. The language of the preceding four lines is derived, with some textual variation, from *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 13a, l. 7.

138. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Yüan Ch'ü-hua (cs 1145), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1502, lower register, l. 15.

139. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 17, p. 194, l. 7.

140. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1252, l. 5; and the long sixteenth-century literary tale *Hua-shen san-miao chuan* (The flower god and the three beauties), in *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 26b, lower register, ll. 1–2.

141. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:412, l. 7; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:52, l. 7; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 15, p. 699, ll. 18–19; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 61, p. 1021, l. 7; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 20, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 66, p. 9a, l. 1.

142. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., a lyric by Tu An-shih (11th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:182, upper register, l. 6; *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 1, p. 3, l. 5; *Ch'i-tung yeh-yü, chüan* 16, p. 301, ll. 3–4; and *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 126, l. 8.

143. The last three characters of this line are not in the text but are required prosodically. I have supplied them conjecturally to maintain the parallelism with the line below.

144. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Hsing-chi (1113–80), *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 20, p. 1362, l. 13; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:373, l. 4; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:978, l. 9; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 146, l. 21; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 99, l. 10.

145. This formulaic four-character expression, which literally means "to win a thousand victories in a thousand batdes," is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:518, l. 6; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:86, l. 13.

146. This couplet is derived, with some textual variation, from the last two lines of a quatrain by Li Po (701–62), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 3, *chüan* 164, p. 1703, l. 9. For an English translation of this poem, see Stephen Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry: The High T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 116. The Mountain of Teeming Jade is one of the names for the abode of the Queen Mother of the West, a matriarchal deity who figures prominentiy in Chinese mythology. For King Huai's dream upon the Radiant Terrace, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 47. According to a well-known legend, which is probably apocryphal, the subject of this poem is Yang Kuei-fei (719–56), the favorite of Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–56) of the T'ang dynasty. See *Sung-ch'uang tsa-lu* (Random records of the pine window), by Li Chün (late 9th century) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1958), pp. 4–5. This quotation is therefore yet another subtle suggestion that Hsi-men Ch'ing is a surrogate emperor figure.

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CHAPTER 30

1. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 8, p. 279, l. 16; and *T'ien-pao i-shih chu-kung-tiao*, p. 175, ll. 2–3.

2. This line, with an insignificant variant in the rhyming position, occurs in a song suite by Shen Ho (13th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:531, l. 8.

3. This four-character expression occurs in a poem by Huang T'ing-chien (1045–1105), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 17:11590, l. 3.

4. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 97, p. 1093, l. 6.

5. This line occurs independently in *Cho Wen-chün ssu-pen Hsiang-ju*, scene 1, p. 115, l. 10; and *Shih-hou chi*, scene 21, p. 70, l. 2. The second half of this line is an allusion to an enigmatic query in the *T'ien wen* (Heavenly questions), a cryptic catechism on cosmological and mythological subjects, probably dating from the fourth century B.C., translated by David Hawkes as, "How does the snake that can swallow an elephant digest its bones?" See *Ch'u-tz'u pu-chu [fu so-yin], chüan* 3, p. 9a, ll. 3–4; and *The Songs of the South*, trans. David Hawkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 128, ll. 35–36. For another reference to a snake that can swallow an elephant, see *Shan-hai ching chiao-chu* (A critical edition of *The classic of mountains and seas*), ed. and annot. Yüan K'o (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), *chüan* 5, p. 281, l. 3 and n. 1.

6. This line alludes to a parable recorded in the *Han-shih wai-chuan* (Exoteric anecdotes illustrative of the Han version of the *Book of Songs*), comp. Han Ying (2d century B.C.), in which Sun-shu Ao (7th century B.C.) admonishes King Chuang of Ch'u (r. 613–591 B.C.), as translated by James Robert Hightower: "In my garden there is an elm tree. On top is a cicada. The cicada is just vibrating his wings and singing his sad song, intent on drinking the fresh dew, not knowing that the mantis behind him is twisting his neck, about to seize and eat him. The mantis, intent on eating the cicada, does not know that behind him the sparrow is stretching his neck, about to peck and eat him. The sparrow, intent on eating the mantis, does not know that the boy beneath the elm tree with cross-bow and pellets is looking up about to shoot him. The boy, intent on shooting the sparrow, does not know that in front of him is a deep pit and behind him a hole. These all are occupied with the advantage before them without regarding the possible injury behind. It is not only animals and common people who behave like this; rulers also do the same thing." See *Han Shih Wai Chuan: Han Ying's Illustrations of the Didactic Application of the Classic of Songs*, trans. James Robert Hightower (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), ch. 10, item 21, p. 342. Another version of the same parable occurs in *Chuang-tzu*. See *Chuang-tzu yin-te* (A concordance to *Chuang-tzu*) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), ch. 20, p. 54, ll. 61–65; and *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), ch. 20, pp. 218–19.

7. This four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i, vol* 1, ch. 28, p. 370, l. 3.

8. This line occurs in a collection of literary tales entitled *Hua-ying chi* (Flower shadows collection), by T'ao Fu (1441–c. 1523), author's preface dated 1523, in *Ming-Ch'ing hsi-chien hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an* (Collectanea of rare works of fiction from the Ming-Ch'ing period) (Chi-nan: Ch'i-Lu shu-she, 1996), p. 917, l. 1.

9. "Free and Easy Wandering" is the title of the first chapter of *Chuang-tzu*. See Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, ch. 1, pp. 29–35. This poem occurs, with some textual

variation, in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1132, ll. 8–9; *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 4b, ll. 12–14; and *Ta-T'ang Ch'in-wang tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, ch. 18, p. 13a, ll. 4–6.

10. This four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 38, p. 499, l. 11; and vol. 2, ch. 74, p. 949, ll. 9–10.

11. This four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Ying-fu (11th century), *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 16, p. 1040, l. 4; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1350, l. 2; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:687, l. 8; and the anonymous Yüan-Ming tsa-chü drama Nü *ku-ku shuo-fa sheng-t'ang chi* (The nun who took the pulpit to expound the dharma), in *Ku-pen Yüan Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 3, scene 4, p. 13b, ll. 7–8.

12. These two formulaic four-character expressions occur together ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Ch'ien-t'ang meng*, p. 1b, l. 1; *Chang Yü-hu su nü-chen kuan chi*, p. 7b, l. 2; *Yüeh-ming Ho-shang tu Liu Ts'ui*, p. 428, l. 8; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 18, p. 837, ll. 12–13; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 21, l. 15; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 49b, l. 5; *Nan Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 16a, l. 2; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 3b, ll. 10–11; *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 12, p. 40a, ll. 2–3; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 144, l. 9; and, in reversed order, *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 36, p. 467, ll. 7–8.

13. The double surname Hsi-men literally means "west gate."

14. A variant of this proverbial couplet is quoted in the commentary to the *Wen-hsüan* by Li Shan (d. 689) as being from the *Liu-t'ao* (Six quivers), a treatise on the art of war probably dating from the fourth century B.C., although it does not seem to occur in the extant version. See *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 36, p. 2b, ll. 5–6. The same idea also occurs in a speech attributed to Hsiao Ho (d. 193 B.C.) in the *Han-shu*, vol. 5, *chüan* 39, p. 2006, l. 15. The couplet occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching*, p. 17a, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1548. ll. 19–20; *Ts'ao-mu tzu* (The gentleman [as perishable as] grass and trees), by Yeh Tzu-ch'i (d. c. 1385), preface dated 1378 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1983), *chüan* 3b, p. 65, l. 2; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 2, scene 24, p. 23a, ll. 5–6; *San-yüan chi*, scene 31, p. 82, l. 9; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 3, p. 5, l. 1; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 9, p. 24, ll. 7–8; and *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 45a, ll. 6–7.

15. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the *Chan-kuo ts'e* (Intrigues of the Warring States), comp. Liu Hsiang (79–8 B.C.), 3 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985), vol. 2, *chüan* 17, p. 556, l. 10; a lyric by Chang Yüan-kan (1091-c. 1162), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1097, lower register, l. 16; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 2, p. 4, l. 1; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 6, p. 101, l. 15; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 137, l. 15.

16. This was a Taoist temple complex, with many of the features of a sumptuous pleasure garden, completed at imperial behest in the year 1116. See *Huang-ch'ao pien-nien kang-mu pei-yao* (Chronological outline of the significant events of the imperial [Sung] dynasty), comp. Ch'en Chün (c. 1165–c. 1236), preface dated 1229, 2 vols, fac. repr. (Taipei: Ch'eng-wen ch'u-pan she, 1966), vol. 2, *chüan* 28, pp. 12a-12b; *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 22, ll. 4–10; and p. 24, ll. 5–7; and *Proclaiming Harmony*, trans. William O. Hennessey (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1981), pp. 31 and 34.

17. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 58, p. 976, l. 13.

18. This four-character expression occurs in *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 4, p. 24a, l. 7.

19. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 38, p. 609, l. 17; and *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 34, p. 135, l. 6.

20. This term occurs in *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 8a, l. 9.

21. A more common variant of this four-character expression, in which "bones" are substituted for "heads," occurs in *Huo Hsiao-yü chuan*, vol. 3, p. 71, l.13; the biography of the Buddhist monk Chung-shan (11th century), in *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 15, p. 973, l. 12; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 39, l. 3; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 143, l. 11.

22. This simile occurs five times in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 192, l. 1; ch. 43, p. 555, l. 10; ch. 44, p. 574, l. 9; vol. 2, ch. 68, p. 877, l. 15; and ch. 71, p. 918, l. 14.

23. The Prince of Yün was Chao K'ai (d. c. 1129), the third son of emperor Hui-tsung by Consort Wang (d. 1117). See his biography in *Sung shih*, vol. 25, *chüan* 246, p. 8725. His fief was in Yün-chou, not far from Ch'ing-ho district in the fictionalized geography of the novel.

24. In the biography of Ts'ai Ching in the *Sung shih*, there is a passage that reads as follows: "In his old age he treated his household as though it were a government office, so that those who wished to jockey for promotion all congregated at his gate. Even the servants and slaves who delivered bribes to him received attractive posts in return. He flouted the laws and regulations as though they were empty vessels." See ibid., vol. 39, *chüan* 472, p. 13728, ll. 2–3.

25. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 22, p. 331, l. 9; and vol. 3, ch. 64, p. 1092, l. 7.

26. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:950, l. 6.

27. This four-character expression occurs in the preface to the "Hsün-li chuan" (Biographies of reasonable officials) in the *Pei-Ch'i shu* (History of the Northern Ch'i dynasty), comp. Li Te-lin (530–90) and his son Li Pai-yao (565–648), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1973), vol. 2, *chüan* 46, p. 637, l. 10.

28. A variant of this four-character expression occurs in a passage in the *Tso-chuan* under the year 535 B.C. See *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, trans. James Legge (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), p. 607, l. 13; and p. 609, right column, l. 46. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in a comment by Wei Cheng (580–643) appended to the biographies of the empresses in the *Ch'en-shu* (History of the Ch'en dynasty), comp. Yao Ch'a (533–606) and his son Yao Ssu-lien (d. 637), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1972), vol. 1, *chüan* 7, p. 133, l. 1; a literary tale by Liu Fu (fl. 1040–1113), in his anthology of tales entitled *Ch'ing-so kao-i* (Lofty sentiments from the green latticed windows) (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1958), *ch'ien-chi, chüan* 4, p. 36, l. 10; *Chien-teng hsin-hua, chüan* 1, p. 20, l. 4; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 2, p. 189, l. 6; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 35, p. 115, l. 1; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 17, p. 74, l. 4.

29. This four-character expression occurs in a memorial by Fan Chen (1007–87), presented to the throne in 1070, attacking the reform policies of Wang An-Shih (1021–86). See *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 8, l. 12. It also occurs in Ch'en Tung's (1086–1127) contemporary indictment of the "six traitors," presented to the throne in 1125. See *Huang-ch'ao pien-nien kang-mu pei-yao*, vol. 2, *chüan* 29, p. 29a, l. 14; and *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 84, l. 10.

30. The proximate source of this couplet, with some textual variation, is *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 12, l. 12. It recurs, with some textual variation, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 70, p. 15a, ll. 3–4.

31. Flower cakes are a special type of seasonal pastry, rich with nuts and fruit filling, customarily eaten on the Double Yang Festival on the ninth day of the ninth month. See

Bodde, *Annual Customs and Festivals in Peking*, pp. 70–71; and Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 2:66.

32. On Teng T'ung, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 3, n. 4.

33. This is an allusion to the story of Fei Ch'ang-fang, a necromancer of the Later Han dynasty (25–220), who was once invited by a mysterious old man to follow him into the gourd in which he lived and found an entire world inside, replete with jade halls, fine wines, and rare delicacies. See his biography in *Hou-Han shu*, vol. 10, *chüan* 82b, pp. 2743–45; and DeWoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China*, pp. 77–81. For a fascinating study of this motif, see Rolf A. Stein, *The World in Miniature: Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 58–77, and passim.

34. The proximate source of this set piece of descriptive parallel prose, with a few textual variants, is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 193, ll. 15–17. A very similar passage occurs in *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 44a, ll. 7–12. Yet another similar passage, with considerable textual variation, recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 97, pp. 6a, l. 10–6b, l. 2.

35. These two formulaic three-character expressions occur in conjunction in *Yang Wen lan-lu hu chuan*, p. 170, l. 10.

36. Versions of this anonymous song suite are preserved in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 531–32; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:206–207; *Chiu-pien nan chiu-kung p'u* (Formulary for the old repertory of the nine southern musical modes), comp. Chiang Hsiao (16th century), preface dated 1549, fac. repr. in *Shan-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an* (Collectanea of rare editions of works on dramatic prosody) (Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1984–87), 26:76–77; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 4, pp. 68a-68b; and *ts'e* 16, pp. 45b-46b. For a translation, see appendix, item 5.

37. For an elaborate description of this ceremony, as practiced in modern China, see Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 1:18–25.

38. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1503, l. 17; *Hsiang-nang yüan*, scene 2, p. 9b, l. 3; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 63, l. 1.

39. The Spirit of the Perilous Paths is a formidable deity, more than ten feet in height. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 4, n. 22.

40. P'an Chin-lien is deliberately casting doubt on the paternity of the child. It should be pointed out that in traditional Chinese belief the normal period of gestation is ten lunar months. That is exactiy the amount of time, to the day, that has elapsed since the first night that Hsi-men Ch'ing slept with Li P'ing-erh after her entry into the household the year before. It follows, therefore, that although P'an Chin-lien's argument is forced, there is some room for ambiguity, because the period of gestation may vary from the norm in individual cases by as much as a few weeks in either direction.

41. This four-character expression recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 2b, l. 6; and vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 7a, ll. 8–9.

42. A variant of this *hsieh-hou yü* occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 71, p. 808, l. 14; another variant recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 41, p. 7b, l. 9; and a truncated version occurs in *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 2, p. 5a, l. 9.

43. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:994, l. 17; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 25, ll. 11–12; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 8a, l. 2; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 225, l. 10; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 50, p. 7a, l. 4.

44. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 20, n. 8.

45. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 59, p. 10a, l. 1.

46. A variant of this four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 5b, l. 4.

47. This four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 39, p. 6b, l. 6.

48. A variant of this four-character expression recurs in ibid., l. 5.

49. I have emended the text of this sentence to bring it into conformity with the time scheme of the novel. The date supplied in the original is manifestly impossible and must be the result of either textual corruption or authorial carelessness. This emendation is confirmed in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 59, p. 16b, l. 6.

50. A prescription for a potion of this name is found in a twelfth-century medical work entitled *San-yin chi i-ping cheng fang lun* (Prescriptions elucidated on the premise that all pathological symptoms have only three primary causes), comp. Ch'en Yen (fl. 1161–80), completed in 1174, 3 vols., fac. repr. in *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu chen-pen, ssu-chi* (Rare volumes from the *Complete library of the four treasuries*, fourth series), 400 vols. (Taipei: T'ai-wan Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1973), vol. 138, *chüan* 8, p. 24b, ll. 2–7. For a modern Chinese recipe for such a tranquilizing potion, see Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 1:13.

51. Variants of this formulaic expression occur in the *Yen-tzu fu* (Rhapsody on the swallow), in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 1:251, l. 9; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:783, l. 1.

52. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 12, p. 35, l. 9; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 54, p. 623, l. 1.

53. This four-character bureaucratic expression occurs in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Yüeh Fei p'o-lu tung-ch'uang chi* (Yüeh Fei defeats the barbarians: The plot at the eastern window), by Chou Li (15th century), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item no. 21, *chüan* 1, scene 18, p. 28b, l. 10.

54. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 2, scene 34, p. 20b, l. 7.

55. A variant of these two lines recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 3a, l. 5.

56. Variants of this proverbial couplet occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:196, l. 11; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 18, p. 67, l. 12; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 1, p. 1, ll. 3–4; and *Tsun-sheng pa-chien*, p. 74, ll. 1–2, where it appears in a song attributed to Wang Shih-chen (1526–90). Versions of the same couplet, with some textual variation, also recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 31, p. 5b, l. 2; and vol. 5, ch. 96, p. 7a, ll. 7–8.

CHAPTER 31

1. "Crane's crest red" is the Chinese name for hornbill ivory, a rare substance made from the red sheath of the casque of the helmeted hornbill, a bird native to southeast Asia. It was highly valued in China, where it was used to make ornamental plaques or facings for official girdles. See Schuyler Cammann, "The Story of Hornbill Ivory," *The University Museum Bulletin* (University of Pennsylvania) 15, 4 (1950): 19–47.

2. Ming official girdles were "large hoops of stiffened leather that extended far beyond the robes, and were used more for ostentatious ornament and the designation of rank … than for the usual, more practical purposes." See ibid., p. 27.

3. The ultimate source of this proverbial four-character expression is a statement attributed to Confucius in paragraph 16, Book 12 of the *Lun-yü*. See *Lun-yü yin-te*, p. 23. It

occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 39, p. 217, ll. 1–2; *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 1, scene 16, p. 23b, l. 6; and *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-chuan, chüan* 6, p. 42a, l. 6.

4. This four-character expression occurs in a document by Ssu-k'ung T'u (837–908) written in 866, *Ch'üan T'ang wen*, vol. 17, *chüan* 707, p. 20a, l. 3; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 5, p. 281, l. 11; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 85, p. 965, l. 8; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 74, p. 959, ll. 11–12; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 70, p. 9a, ll. 8–9.

5. This line is quoted as a proverbial saying in *Hsiang-yen chieh-i* (Pleasing examples of rustic discourse), by Li Kuang-t'ing (b. 1773), originally published in 1850 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1982), *chüan* 5, p. 104, l. 4.

6. This proverbial saying occurs in the anonymous Ming tsa-chü drama *Sung ta-chiang Yüeh Fei ching-chung* (The perfect loyalty of the Sung general-in-chief Yüeh Fei), in *Ku-pen Yüan-Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 3, scene 1, p. 1b, l. 3.

7. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 19a, l. 3.

8. This four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 35, p. 14b, l. 7.

9. The magical properties of this type of rhinoceros horn are described as early as the fourth century. See *Pao-p'u tzu* (The master who embraces simplicity), by Ko Hung (283–343), in *Chu-tzu chi-ch'eng*, vol. 8, *nei-p'ien* (inner chapters), ch. 17, p. 89, ll. 2–10; and *Alchemy, Medicine, Religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung (Pao-p'u tzu)*, trans. James R. Ware (Cambridge: M.I.T Press, 1966), pp. 297–98. This type of rhinoceros horn and its properties are also referred to in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 5a, l. 2; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 43a, l. 6; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 92, p. 1043, ll. 6–7; and p. 1046, l. 8.

10. This four-character expression occurs as early as the eighth century in *T'ai-kung chia-chiao*, p. 25, l. 15. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:904, l. 9; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 3, p. 6, l. 9; *Ming-feng chi*, scene 4, p. 13, l. 4; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 89, p. 1010, l. 7; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 260, l. 15. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 56, p. 5b, l. 1; and vol. 5, ch. 94, p. 4a, l. 5.

11. Chinese officials appointed by the central government were traditionally divided into nine ranks for purposes of determining prestige, compensation, etc. These ranks were further subdivided into first and second classes, thus making a total of eighteen grades in all.

12. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 17, n. 42.

13. Each of the twelve earthly branches that are combined with the ten celestial stems to create the sexagenary cycle is presided over by a god with a name of his own. According to some schools of Chinese fortune telling, six of these gods are lucky and six are unlucky. The Green Dragon, which presides over the branch *tzu* and the Metal-bound Casket, which presides over the branch *ch'en*, are among the six that are regarded as lucky.

14. This proverbial couplet, with one textual variant, occurs in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 14a, ll. 2–3.

15. This nickname is significant because Chang Sung (d. 212) is a historical figure who is chiefly renowned for his diminutive stature, his talented but dissolute character, and for having betrayed the interests of his master, Liu Chang (d. 219). See *San-kuo chih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 31, pp. 868–69; and *chüan* 32, pp. 881–82.

16. The term “gate-boy” was commonly used to refer to servant boys who also served their employers as catamites. For a sixteenth-century song on this subject, see *Hua-chi yü-yün* (Superfluous rhymes on humorous subjects), by Ch’en To (fl. early 16th century), reprinted from a Wan-li [1573–1620] edition in Lu Kung, *Fang-shu chien-wen lu* (Record of things seen and heard in the search for rare books) (Shanghai: Shanghai ku-chi ch’u-pan she, 1985), p. 337, ll. 7–8.

17. This four-character expression alludes to a famous anecdote about Ho Yen (c. 190–249), which Richard B. Mather translates as follows. “Ho Yen was handsome in appearance and demeanor, and his face was extremely white. Emperor Wen of Wei suspected that he used powder. At the peak of the summer months he offered him some hot soup and dumplings. After Ho had eaten it he broke into a profuse sweat and with his scarlet robe was wiping his face, but his complexion became whiter than ever.” See Mather, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü*, p. 308. The expression is used to characterize the appearance of Wang Fu (1079–1126), one of the “six traitors” said to have been responsible for the fall of the Northern Sung dynasty (960–1127), in a work by Ts’ai T’ao (d. after 1147), a son of Ts’ai Ching (1046–1126), entitled *T’ieh-wei shan ts’ung-t’an* (Collected remarks from the Iron Cordon Mountains) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1997), *chüan* 3, p. 56, l. 4. It also occurs in *San-kuo chih t’ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 143, l. 25; *Shui-hu ch’üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 40, p. 648, l. 13; *Nan Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 15a, l. 12; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 9a, l. 1; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 46a, l. 2; *Ch’üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 9b, ll. 6–7; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 9b, l. 11; *Sui-T’ang liang-ch’ao shih-chuan, chüan* 1, p. 31b, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 41, p. 470, l. 10; and *San-pao t’ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t’ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 11, l. 5.

18. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch’üan-pien, chüan* 634, p. 16a, l. 6; *Shui-hu ch’üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 306, l.9; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 43a, l. 9; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 27, p. 305, l. 16; and *San-pao t’ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t’ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 131, l. 10.

19. There is a discrepancy in the text with regard to this character since in chapter 20 we have already been told that Hsi-men Ch’ing bought a page boy named Ch’i-t’ung. See the *Chin P’ing Mei tz’u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 12a, ll. 9–10; and Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:420, l. 32.

20. During the Ming dynasty the lion in the mandarin square was an insignia of rank that only military officials of the first and second ranks were legally entitled to wear. Hsi-men Ch’ing, who was a military official of the fifth rank, should have had a bear in his mandarin square and was thus appearing in public in regalia to which he was not entitled. According to an edict of 1527, officials both in and outside the capital were also forbidden to wear robes of variegated embroidery or of colors to which they were not entitled. See *Ming shih*, vol. 6, *chüan* 67, p. 1638, l. 4; and p. 1639, ll. 4–5. Shen Te-fu (1578–1642) reports that the practice of low-ranking military officials wearing insignia to which they were not entitled began as early as 1453 and became ever more common until even ordinary soldiers appeared on duty wearing mandarin squares featuring the lion. See *Wan-li yeh-huo pien*, vol. 3, *pu-i* (supplement), *chüan* 3, p. 870, ll. 8–12. For a picture from a Ming source of a mandarin square featuring the lion with the ruffled mane, see Chou Hsi-pao, *Chung-kuo ku-tai fu-shih shih* (History of traditional Chinese costume) (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-chü ch’u-pan she, 1984), p. 396.

21. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to Emperor T’ai-tsung (r. 976–97) of the Sung dynasty. See *Hsü Tzu-chih t’ung-chien ch’ang-pien* (Long

draft of A continuation of the comprehensive mirror for aid in government), comp. Li T'ao (1115–84), 34 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979–93), vol. 4, *chüan* 41, p. 868, l. 2. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:75. 1. 9; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 31, p. 177, l. 8; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 33, p. 110, l. 5; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 26, p. 80, l. 8; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 42a, ll. 5–6; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 234, l. 7; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 3, p. 147, l. 15.

22. Variants of this line occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:102, l. 12; 3:876, ll. 10–11; 1213, l. 13; 4:1413, l. 1; and 1582, ll. 2–3; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:550, l. 7; 3.710, l. 11; and 3:1008, l. 2.

23. This line occurs verbatim in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 23, p. 73, l. 7; and close variants occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:933, l. 12; 4:1412, l. 3; and 4:1581, l. 13; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 15, p. 55, l. 9; and *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 18, p. 46, l. 11. Close variants of the two preceding lines occur together in *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 4, scene 42, p. 23a, l. 4.

24. For an elaborate description of the full-month celebration as practiced in Peking in the early decades of this century, see Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 1:26–42.

25. According to imperial edicts of 1391 and 1458, officials and ordinary citizens were forbidden to wear clothing of this color. See *Ming shih*, vol. 6, *chüan* 67, p. 1638, ll. 5 and 9.

26. Colorful effigies of the two Gate Gods are commonly pasted on the leaves of the front gate at New Year's time in order to ward off evil spirits. See Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 2:144.

27. These two lines are derived from a couplet in a poem by Tu Fu (712–70), which reads:

> Screens display golden peacocks' tails,
> Cushions conceal embroidered hibiscus blossoms.

See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 224, p. 2391, l. 4. They also occur together in the same truncated form in the middle period vernacular story entitled *Feng-yüeh hsiang-ssu* (A tale of romantic longing), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 85, l. 10.

28. A variant of this idiomatic expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:687, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. 5a, l. 10; and vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 3a, l. 8.

29. This is the first half of a *hsieh-hou yü*, the second half of which is "it would never do." Variants of this idiomatic expression recur twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 16a, l. 1; and vol. 3, ch. 43, p. 5a, l. 4.

30. Variants of this proverbial couplet occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1289, ll. 4–5; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 51, p. 840, l. 14.

31. The practice of sorting people into upper, middle, and lower classes, further subdivided into upper upper, upper middle, upper lower, etc., making nine categories in all, is as old as the *Ku-chin jen piao* (Table of ancient and modern personalities) in the *Han-shu*. See ibid., vol. 2, *chüan* 20, pp. 861–951. Variants of this expression recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 35, p. 21b, l. 6; ch. 39, p. 12a, l. 7; vol. 4, ch. 62, p. 24a, l. 6; and ch. 73, p. 9b, ll. 6–7.

32. Variants of this four-character expression occur in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 76, p. 868, l. 10; and in a song lyric by Hsüeh Lun-tao (c. 1531–c. 1600), in *Ming-tai ko-ch'ü hsüan*, p.

106, l. 3.

33. These two lines recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 11a, ll. 2–3.

34. This expression recurs in ibid., vol. 5, ch. 85, p. 9b, l. 9.

35. Variants of this proverbial couplet are ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. It occurs as early as the twelfth century as the final couplet in an anonymous quatrain composed to satirize the pretensions of Ming Ch'un (fl. mid-12th century). See *I-chien chih* (Records of I-chien), comp. Hung Mai (1123–1202), 4 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), vol. 3, *san-chih, chi* (third record, section six), *chüan* 7, p. 1353, ll. 4–5. It also occurs in the year 1200 as the final couplet in an anonymous quatrain criticizing the posthumous tide conferred upon Ching T'ang (1138–1200). See *Sung-shih chi-shih* (Recorded occasions in Sung poetry), comp. Li O (1692–1752) and Ma Yüeh-kuan (1688–1755), 14 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1937), vol. 14, *chüan* 96, p. 2357, l. 10. See also *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching*, p. 23a, l. 7; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 9, p. 288, ll. 10–11; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:44, l. 20; and 4:1470, l. 16; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:102, l. 6; and 3:908, l. 19; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 30, p. 173, l. 11; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 17, p. 66, l. 10; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 19, p. 60, l. 10; *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 1, scene 17, p. 33b, l. 6; *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 4, scene 41, p. 16a, l. 9; *[Hsin-pien] Liu Chih-yüan huan-hsiang Pai-t'u chi*, p. 26b, ll. 8–9; and p. 35b, l. 11; *Yü-huan chi*, scene 15, p. 57, l. 7; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 27, p. 89, l. 7; and a song lyric by Hsüeh Lun-tao (c. 1531-c. 1600), in *Ming-tai ko-ch'ü hsüan*, p. 106, ll. 3–4. Variants of the first line occur independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:80, l. 14; 1:319, l. 3; and 3:937, l. 9; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:449, l. 6; and the second line occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:99, l. 9; and the anonymous Yüan-Ming tsa-chü drama *Meng-mu san-i* (The mother of Mencius moves three times), in *Ku-pen Yüan Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 2, scene 1, p. 3b, l. 5.

36. For a portrait of the sixteenth-century official Ch'i Chi-kuang (1528–88) dressed in such a python robe, see Chou Hsi-pao, *Chung-kuo ku-tai fu-shih shih*, p. 388.

37. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 2, scene 30, p. 16b, l. 1; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 40, p. 133, l. 5; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 158, l. 23; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 66, p. 1124, l. 1; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 29a, l. 2; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 95, p. 1070, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 32, p. 419, l. 10.

38. This classic melody was the music to accompany the Succession Dance, said to have been composed at the court of the legendary Emperor Shun (3rd millennium B.C.) in order to mime his peaceful accession to the throne. It is this music of which it is said of Confucius in Book 7 of the *Lun-yü* (The analects of Confucius) that: "When he was in Ch'i the Master heard the Succession [Dance], and for three months did not know the taste of meat. He said, 'I did not picture to myself that any music existed which could reach such perfection as this.' " See *The Analects of Confucius*, trans. Arthur Waley (London: Allen and Unwin, 1949), p. 125. This allusion is ironic because Hsi-men Ch'ing and his guests not only lack the appreciation for classic tradition of Confucius but are depicted immediately afterwards as enjoying a feast of fine meats.

39. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 20, n. 27. The piece that follows is one of the handful of extant examples of this form of comic farce. Its provenance is unknown, but it may be related to the title *T'eng-wang ko* (The Prince of T'eng's pavilion) listed in the entry *Yüan-pen ming-mu* (A list of yüan-pen titles), in *Ch'o-keng lu* (Notes recorded during respites from the plough), by T'ao Tsung-i (c. 1316–c. 1403), preface dated 1366 (Peking:

Chung-hua shu-chü, 1980), *chüan* 25, p. 309, l. 12. It has been translated by James I. Crump, Jr., as *Wang P'o Yüan-pen*, in *Dodder* 2 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Centers for Chinese and Japanese Studies, 1970): 31–34; and by W. L. Idema in his monograph entitled "*Yüan-pen* as a Minor Form of Dramatic Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 6, 1 and 2 (July 1984): 73–75. For an excellent discussion of the significance of this comic farce within the rhetorical structure of the *Chin P'ing Mei*, see Katherine Carlitz, "The Role of Drama in the *Chin P'ing Mei:* The Relationship between Fiction and Drama as a Guide to the Viewpoint of a Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1978, pp. 299–304.

40. These four lines are stock phrases that occur, sometimes with insignificant textual variants, both together and independently, in Chinese vernacular literature. They occur together in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 6a, ll. 14–15, where they are identified as *Chuang-yüan shih* (Poem of the top graduate); *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:415, ll. 89; and 3:1142, l. 17; *[Hsin-pien] Liu Chih-yüan huan-hsiang Pai-t'u chi*, p. 1b, ll. 3–4; and *Sha-kou chi*, scene 35, p. 119, l. 12. The first and second couplets are listed independently in *Shih-lin kuang-chi, ts'e 2, ch'ien-chi, chüan* 9, p. 9a, l. 1; and p. 7a, l. 4. The first couplet occurs in *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 34, p. 159, ll. 4–5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:36, l. 12; *Chang Yü-hu wu-su nü-chen kuan*, scene 4, p. 623, l. 6; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 32, p. 107, l. 3; *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 2, scene 40, p. 31b, l. 3; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 39, p. 165, l. 4. The first, third, and fourth lines also occur independently. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1404, l. 14; *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 3, scene 21, p. 7a, l. 9; and *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 22, p. 131, l. 8.

41. This was a famous landmark on the bank of the Kan River in Nan-ch'ang, the capital of what is now Kiangsi province. It was named after Li Yüan-ying (d. 684), the twenty-second son of Emperor Kao-tsu of the T'ang dynasty (r. 618–626), who became Prince of T'eng in 639 and built the pavilion in 659, while he was the prefect of Hung-chou (Nan-ch'ang).

42. Wang Po (649–76) was a famous man of letters of the early T'ang period who composed this poem, and the lengthy parallel prose preface that serves to introduce it, on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year 675. For the text of the poem, see *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 2, *chüan* 55, p. 673, ll. 1–2. For a translation and discussion of this poem, see Stephen Owen, *The Poetry of the Early T'ang* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 136–37. Both the preface and the poem itself deal with the evanescence of worldly glory, and the last couplet of the poem reads:

> Within the pavilion, where is the emperor's
> son today?
> Outside the balustrade, the river flows on,
> unheeding.

These allusions are grossly inappropriate to the celebration of Hsi-men Ch'ing's birthday and the birth of his first son but do subtly serve to suggest that he is a surrogate emperor figure. It is perhaps relevant that Wang Po and Li Yüan-ying were both morally problematic characters. Wang Po was guilty of murdering one of his own slaves, and Li Yüan-ying was so dissolute that his nephew, Emperor Kao-tsung (r. 649–83), felt compelled to reprimand him in a letter that is included in his biography. See *Chiu T'ang shu* (Old history of the T'ang dynasty), comp. Liu Hsü (887–946) et al., 16 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1975), vol. 15, *chüan* 190a, p. 5005; and vol. 7. *chüan* 64, pp. 2436–37.

43. The allegation that Wang Po was not quite three feet tall is based on a misunderstanding of a statement he makes about himself in the *Teng-wang ko hsü* (Preface to the poem on the Prince of T'eng's Pavilion), in which he says, "I, Wang Po, am but a minor official [entitled to wear] a three foot [sash]." The elliptical nature of literary Chinese makes it possible to misconstrue this line as meaning, "I, Wang Po, am but a minor official [who is] three feet [tall]." For the line in question, see ibid, in *Chuan T'ang wen*, vol. 4, *chüan* 281, p. 19b, l. 6. For a translation by Victor H. Mair of this famous example of parallel prose, see *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 547–55, where the line in question is translated on p. 553. The "three foot [sash]" is an allusion to a passage in the *Li-chi* (Book of rites), where it is stated, as translated by James Legge, "The rule for the length of the sash (descending from the girdle) was that, for an officer, it should be 3 cubits." See *Li-chi*, in *Shih-san ching ching-wen* (The texts of the thirteen classics) (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1955), ch. 11, p. 61, l. 4; and *Li Chi: Book of Rites*, trans. James Legge, 2 vols. (New Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1967), vol. 2, pp. 15–16.

44. This four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to Ts'ao Chih (192–232) in the year 210, in which he characterizes his own facility at composition in response to an inquiry from his father Ts'ao Ts'ao (155–220). See *San-kuo chih*, vol. 2, *chüan* 19, p. 557, l. 9. It also occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:527, l. 13; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 2, scene 19, p. 8a, ll. 3–4; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 7, p. 333, l. 11.

45. This formulaic couplet, occurring in slightly variant forms, is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Huan-men tzu-ti ts'o li-shen*, scene 2, p. 221, ll. 8–9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:921, l. 13; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 9, p. 57, l. 5; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 24, p. 91, l. 7; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 27, p. 86, l. 10; *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 1, scene 18, p. 34a, ll. 2–3; *Ching-chung chi*, scene 16, p. 40, l. 7; *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 10, p. 26, l. 1; the anonymous fifteenth-century ch'uan-ch'i drama *Ts'ai-lou chi* (The gaily colored tower), ed. Huang Shang (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1956), scene 16, p. 57, ll. 2–3; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 9, p. 20, l. 9; and *Sanpao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 40, p. 518, l. 3. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 71, p. 6b, l. 6.

46. The Chinese divided the celestial sphere into twenty-eight lunar mansions, each of which was designated by the name of a star or asterism that fell within it. These celestial segments were believed to be correlated with the corresponding divisions of the terrestrial sphere. For a table of these lunar mansions and the names of the stars or asterisms by which they were designated, see Joseph Needham and Wang Ling, *Science and Civilisation in China*, vol. 3, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 234–37.

47. According to a story recorded in the biography of Chang Hua (232–300), he once discovered, with the aid of his friend Lei Huan, a pair of magic swords the effulgence from which illuminated the area between the Herd Boy and the Dipper, though they were buried in a stone coffer forty feet underground in Yü-chang commandery. Lei Huan disinterred the swords, kept one for himself, and sent the other to Chang Hua. After the deaths of the two men, the pair of swords, which were male and female, were miraculously reunited, changed into dragons, and disappeared. See *Chin shu* (History of the Chin dynasty [265–420]), comp. Fang Hsüan-ling (578–648) et al., 10 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), vol. 4, *chüan* 36, pp. 1075–76; and Anna Straughair, *Chang Hua: A Statesman-Poet of the Western Chin Dynasty* (Canberra: Faculty of Asian Studies, Australian National University, 1973), pp. 60–63.

48. Hsü Chih (97–168) was a native of Nan-ch'ang who was highly regarded by his contemporaries but refused to take office. When Ch'en Fan (95–168) was serving as prefect of the area, although he generally refused to receive visitors, he made an exception of Hsü Chih, whom he so much admired that he kept a cot suspended for his use, which he would let down whenever he came to visit. See his biography in the *Hou-Han shu*, vol. 6, *chüan* 53, p. 1746.

49. This four-character expression occurs in a quatrain attributed to Lü Tung-pin (9th century). See *Sung Pai Chen-jen Yü-ch'an ch'üan-chi* (Complete works of the Perfect Man Pai Yü-ch'an of the Sung dynasty), by Ko Ch'ang-keng (1134–1229) (Taipei: *Sung Pai Chen-jen Yü-ch'an ch'üan-chi* chi-yin wei-yüan hui, 1976), *chüan* 3, p. 57, l. 3. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 48, p. 10a, ll. 1–2.

50. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1239, l. 7, where it occurs together with a close variant of the preceding line; and 4:1688, l. 12; *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 1, scene 2, p. 17, l. 8; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 2, scene 26, p. 30a, l. 10; the anonymous Yüan-Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama *Huang hsiao-tzu* (The filial son Huang [Chüeh-ching]), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 23, *chüan* 2, scene 25, p. 39a, l. 9; *Yen-chih chi, chüan* 2, scene 29, p. 14a, l. 7; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 247, l. 10; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 40, p. 71, l. 17; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 81, p. 924, l. 10; *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2b, p. 128, l. 11; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 32, p. 419, l. 8.

51. This four-character expression occurs in Chüeh-lien's commentary to the *Chin-kang k'o-i* (Liturgical exposition of the Diamond Sutra). See *[Hsiao-shih] Chin-kang k'o-i [hui-yao chu-chieh]* ([Clearly presented] liturgical exposition of the Diamond sutra [with critical commentary]), ed. and annot. Chüeh-lien (16th century), preface dated 1551, in *[Shinzan] Dai Nihon zokuzōkyō* ([Newly compiled] great Japanese continuation of the Buddhist canon), 100 vols. (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1977), 24:653, upper register, l. 14; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 26, p. 341, l. 11; and vol. 2, ch. 61, p. 783, l. 12.

52. The basic idea behind this couplet is found as early as the third century B.C. in *Hsün-tzu*, where we find the statement, as translated by John Knoblock, "Not having heard something is not as good as having heard it; having heard it is not as good as having seen it." See *Hsün-tzu yin-te* (A concordance to *Hsün-tzu*) (Taipei: Chinese Materials and Research Aids Service Center, 1966), ch. 8, p. 24, l. 14; and *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, trans. John Knoblock, 3 vols. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988–94), 2:81. The first line occurs in a more common variant form in the *Pei shih* (History of the Northern dynasties [386–618]), comp. Li Yen-shou (7th century), 10 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), vol. 9, *chüan* 91, p. 2998, l. 1, where it is quoted as proverbial; and in the same form as in the novel in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:997, l. 6. The couplet occurs in slightly variant forms in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 46, l. 10; ch. 4, p. 61, l. 3; and vol. 2, ch. 37, p. 580, l. 5; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 25, p. 325, l. 13.

53. This four-character expression is derived from a line in a poem by Li Po (701–62) celebrating the "grass writing" of the famous calligrapher Huai-su (737-c. 799), which reads, "From time to time all one can see is the flight of dragons and serpents." See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 3, *chüan* 167, p. 1729, l. 12. Variants of this expression occur in a lyric by Ch'ien Ch'u-jen (12th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u pu-chi* (Supplement to Complete *tz'u* lyrics

of the Sung), comp. K'ung Fan-li (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1981), p. 52, lower register, l. 1; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1234, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:1007, l. 11; and a song suite by Wang Chiu-ssu (1468–1551), *Ch'üan Ming san-ch'ü* (Complete nondramatic song lyrics of the Ming), comp. Hsieh Po-yang, 5 vols. (Chi-nan: Ch'i-Lu shu-she, 1994), 1:949, l. 4. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Yüeh Fei p'o-lu tung-ch'uang chi, chüan* 1, scene 2, p. 2a, l. 5; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2b, p. 130, l. 2.

54. The first line of this couplet occurs independently in *Han P'eng fu* (Rhapsody on Han P'eng). See *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 1:139, l. 16; and *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang*, trans. Arthur Waley (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 61, l. 27. The two lines occur together in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:442, l. 1; and recur twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 6a, l. 5; and ch. 100, p. 14a, l. 3.

55. It was customary to reward professional female performers by offering them strips of brocade, which they would then display by wrapping them around their heads. This quatrain describing the performance of a dancer is by Tu Fu (712–70), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 226, p. 2447, l. 6. It is frequently alluded to in texts describing early types of dramatic performance and is quoted in full in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 82, p. 1360, l. 6, in the course of a set-piece of descriptive parallel prose describing an imperial entertainment at the court of Emperor Hui-tsung of the Sung dynasty (r. 1100–25). For a translation of this passage, see Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West, *Chinese Theater 1100–1450: A Source Book* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982), pp. 135–37. The first and second lines of the quatrain are quoted in an anonymous song suite about the demimonde in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1822, ll. 9–10; the second line and a variant of the fourth line are quoted in a song suite about an acting troupe by Kao An-tao (14th century) in ibid, 2:1110, ll. 10–11; translated in Idema and West, *Chinese Theater 1100–1450*, pp. 191–94; and the third and fourth lines are quoted in *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 9, p. 23, l. 12.

56. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:454, l. 19; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:423, l. 13; *[Hsin-tseng] Ch'iu-po i-chuan lun* ([Newly added] Treatise on the single meaningful glance), by Lai-feng Tao-jen, included as part of the front matter in the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi*, p. 8a, l. 3; and *San-ming t'ung-hui, chüan*, 1, p. 29a, l. 2.

57. This song suite is by Lü Chih-an (14th century). Versions of it are preserved in the following anthologies: *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1130–32; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 466–67; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 2:914–18; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 14, pp. 26a-27b. This work on the carpe diem theme is most inappropriate to the occasion, containing as it does lines such as, "In a turn of the head we will all be ghosts under the Pei-mang Mountains." See *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1130, l. 10. For a translation of this song suite, see appendix, item 6.

58. This song suite is from scene 2 of the anonymous Yüan tsa-chü drama entitled *Pao chuang-ho* (Carrying the dressing-case), a story about the eunuch Ch'en Lin, who rescues the future Emperor Jen-tsung (r. 1022–63) of the Sung dynasty, while still a babe in arms, from the wrath of a jealous empress who is bent on his destruction, by carrying him out of the palace in a dressing-case. The suite is sung by Ch'en Lin. See *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1460–65. This song suite is also preserved independently in the anthologies *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 293–96; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 2:1053–60; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 9, pp. 43a-45b. The first two lines quoted in the novel are closer to the version given in the anthologies than to that in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*. Eunuch Liu calls for this song suite, no doubt, because it portrays the eunuch Ch'en Lin in a heroic light, but it is egregiously inappropriate to the occasion, although it is very germane to the plot of the novel, since it deals with the attempted

assassination of an emperor's son by a jealous rival of the child's mother. For a translation of the first song in this suite, see appendix, item 7.

59. I have emended the tune tide, which is given as *P'u-t'ien lo* (The whole realm rejoices), but which seems to be in error.

60. This set of songs to the same tune is by Liu T'ing-hsin (14th century). See *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1430–32; the sixteenth-century anthology of short songs entitled *Yüeh-fu ch'ün-chu* (A string of lyric pearls), modern ed. ed. Lu Ch'ien (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1957), *chüan* 3, pp. 191–93; *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 586–90; and *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:88–96.

61. This song suite has already been performed in chapter 16. See the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 1 la, l. 9; and Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:333; and chap. 16, n. 19. For a translation of this song suite, see ibid., appendix II, item 2, pp. 441–44.

62. This four-character expression for the birth of a son is derived from a passage in the eighth stanza of song no. 189 in the *Shih-ching*, which Arthur Waley translates as follows:

> So he bears a son,
> And puts him to sleep upon a bed,
> Clothes him in robes,
> Gives him a jade sceptre to play with.

See *Mao-shih yin-te*, p. 42; and Waley, *The Book of Songs*, p. 283. Variants of this expression occur in the biography of Li Lin-fu (d. 752) in the *Chiu T'ang shu*, vol. 10, *chüan* 106, p. 3240, l. 8, where he reveals his ignorance by writing it incorrectly; and in *Hsiao-p'in chi, chüan* 3, p. 96, l. 3. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in the prose introduction to a lyric by Hsiang Tzu-yin (1085–1152), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:961, lower register, l. 16; and the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Chin-lien chi* (The golden lotus [lamp]), by Ch'en Ju-yüan (fl. 1572–1629), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 2, p. 2, l. 11.

63. This four-character expression is derived from a passage in *Lieh-tzu* (4th century), which may be considerably older than its date of compilation. A. C. Graham translates it as follows: "Once a woman named Erh of Han ran out of provisions while travelling East to Ch'i. She entered the capital through the Concord Gate, and traded her songs for a meal. When she left, the lingering notes curled round the beams of the gate and did not die away for three days." See *Lieh-tzu chi-shih* (A critical edition of *Lieh-tzu*), ed. Yang Po-chün (Hong Kong: T'ai-p'ing shu-chü, 1965), *chüan* 5, p. 111, ll. 1–2; and *The Book of Lieh-tzu*, trans. A. C. Graham (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 109. A variant of this expression occurs in *Yen lien-chu* (An arrangement of strung pearls), by Lu Chi (261–303), in *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 55, p. 17a, l. 6; and it occurs in the same form as in the novel in the middle-period vernacular story *Ch'en K'o-ch'ang Tuan-yang hsien-hua* (Ch'en K'o-ch'ang is transfigured on the Dragon Boat Festival), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 7, p. 82, l. 15.

64. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:999, l. 4; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 96, p. 1082, l. 4.

65. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Cho Wen-chün ssu-pen Hsiang-ju*, scene 4, p. 135, l. 9; and *Chieh-chih-erh chi*, p. 252, l. 11.

66. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 46, l. 8.

67. This four-character expression occurs in *Lo-yang san-kuai chi*, p. 74, l. 12.

68. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 32, p. 151, l. 15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*,

3:1246, l. 16; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 5, p. 286, l. 2; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 33, p. 109, l. 8; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 82, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 5, p. 84, l. 9; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 4, p. 6a, l. 3; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 38b, l. 2; *Huan-sha chi*, scene 14, p. 47, l. 5; *Ming-feng chi*, scene 23, p. 100, l. 1; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 2a, p. 78, l. 6.

69. The idea expressed by this proverbial line occurs in different words in a poem by Chang Hua (232–300). See *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 29, p. 19a, l. 2. This line, which usually reads "night" rather than "day," is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 16, p. 85, l. 13; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 16, p. 313, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:627, l. 13; the early vernacular story *Chi Ya-fan chin-man ch'an-huo* (Duty Group Leader Chi's golden eel engenders catastrophe), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 20, p. 284, l. 8; *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 430, l. 9; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 247, l. 4; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 313, l. 9; and, in truncated form, *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 63, p. 726, l. 12.

70. This is the last line of a quatrain on the subject of crab apples by Su Shih (1037–1101), *Su Shih shih-chi*, vol. 4, *chüan 22*, p. 1187, l. 4.

CHAPTER 32

1. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. la, l. 4.

2. See chap. 27, n. 63.

3. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:311–12.

4. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Ch'eng Ta-ch'ang (1123–95), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1525, upper register, l. 8; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 9, p. 25, l. *2; Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 345, l. 13; *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 10, p. 26, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 95, p. 1218, l. 5.

5. This type of toy consists of a handle with a small, double-sided drum mounted on the end, to which there are two balls attached by strings, so that when it is twirled back and forth they will alternately strike the two surfaces of the drum. The same musical instrument, written with variant orthographies, is mentioned in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:873, l. 17; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 80, p. 919, l. 2. It is perhaps ironic that this plaything, with its manifestly phallic connotations, should be presented to Hsi-men Ch'ing's ill-fated son by a eunuch, a member of a class of persons that is symbolically associated in the world of the novel with impotence, sterility, and loss.

6. This is a type of large square table, capable of seating two persons on each side.

7. There is a sixteenth-century figure of this name who passed the *chin-shih* examinations in 1529. See Liu Chung-kuang, "*Chin P'ing Mei* jen-wu k'ao-lun" (A study of the historical figures in the *Chin P'ing Mei*), in Yeh Kuei-t'ung et al., eds. *Chin P'ing Mei tso-che chih mi* (The riddle of the authorship of the *Chin P'ing* Mei)(N.p.: Ning-hsia jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1988), p. 173.

8. This drama by Lu Chin-chih (fl. 14th–15th centuries) is no longer extant, but two songs from it have been preserved in the *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 4, pp. 64a-64b. See *Yüan-jen tsa-chü kou-ch'en* (Rescued fragments from tsa-chü drama by Yüan authors), comp. Chao Ching-shen (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1956), pp. 128–29.

9. This formulaic four-character expression recurs four times in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 21b, l. 2; ch. 78, p. 3b, l. 1; vol. 5, ch. 93, p. 9a, l. 2; and ch. 97, p. 1b l. 1.

10. This song suite is from the first scene of the early Ming tsa-chü drama entitled *T'ieh-kuai Li tu Chin-t'ung Yü-nü* (Iron-Crutch Li converts the Golden Lad and the Jade Maiden), by Chia Chung-ming (1343-c. 1422), in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1093–95. It also occurs independently in the following anthologies: *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, pp. 137–39; *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:481–85; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 4, pp. 47b-49a; and *Chun-yin lei-hsüan*, 3:1895–98. For a translation of the first song in this suite, see appendix, item 8.

11. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 8, n. 41; and chap. 15, n. 19.

12. The slang term *ting-pa* is interpreted in various ways by commentators on the novel, but since it is written with two characters meaning "nail" and "eight" that, if superimposed, would produce the common negative *pu*, I take it to mean "ended" or "kaput." I have tried to suggest this by punning "a-nail-eighted" with "annihilated." The same otherwise unattested term recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 14a, l. 6.

13. The text here reads Feng rather than Chang, but there is no character named Feng in the novel that fits the context. I have emended the text to read Chang because of a very similar passage, including some identical wording, in vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 14a, ll. 3–6, in which Chang Mao-te (Chang the Second) is named explicitly.

14. Liu the Ninth is a stock character in Chinese drama whose name has become a generic term for a beggar. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:373–74; 3:1059, and 3:1065–67; a song by Chung Ssu-ch'eng (c. 1279-c. 1360), in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1351, l. 10; *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 31, p. 85, l. 2; and a *hsieh-hou yü* in *Shih-yü sheng-sou: Chung-yüan shih-yü* (Market argot and slang: The market argot of the Central Plain), published in the Lung-ch'ing reign period (1567–72) and reprinted in *Han-shang huan wen-ts'un*, p. 168, upper register, l. 9.

15. This example of the argot of the licensed quarters is intentionally opaque, and the commentators are not agreed on its interpretation. The first three characters *hsiao-tzu shih* mean "artificial crystal," which was sometimes used to make spectacles. The next four characters *wang-che nan-erh* mean "gazing southward," but the word *nan* meaning "south" is often punned with the word *nan* meaning "male," as in the expression *nan-feng*, literally "southern breeze," which is frequently used as a substitute for *nan-feng* meaning "homosexual propensity," an implication I have tried to suggest by the term "southern exposure." The last three characters *ting k'ou hsin* should, I think, be emended to read *ting k'ou ya hsin*, an example of wordplay created by splitting graphs into their component parts. The first two of these graphs can be combined to form the character *k'o* and the last two graphs combined to form the character *wu*, which would then form the compound *k'o-wu*, meaning "detestable" or "repulsive." Support for this emendation may be found in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 22a, l. 2, where this same wordplay occurs, although the text there also requires some emendation.

16. A tiger-head tally was a bronze insignia, cast in the shape of, or stamped with the image of, a tiger's head, that conferred plenipotentiary military powers on its bearer. Horse-hoof gold was a high grade of natural gold often cast in ingots the shape of which resembled a horse's hoof. It is also mentioned in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 56, p. 646, l. 10. This song is the second of a set of four anonymous songs to the same tune that are included in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 18, pp. 45a–45b. For a translation of this song, see appendix, item 9.

17. These two lines recur in reverse order, with insignificant textual variation, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 98, p. 4b, ll. 5–6.

18. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 69, p. 792, l. 8.

19. This *hsieh-hou yü* recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 7a, l. 11.

20. This idiomatic expression recurs in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 40, p. 6b, l. 7.

21. Commentators do not agree on the interpretation of the line *ch'ing tao ma kuo*, which is made up of four characters the literal meanings of which are "blue" "blade" "horse" "pass." My rendering is based on the fact that the first two characters are the phonetic elements in the two characters *ching tao*, which could mean "sperm arrives." The character for "horse" may be a pun for the character *ma*, which can be used to describe the tingling or melting sensation immediately prior to a sexual climax. The last character has the well-attested slang meaning of "sexual climax," either male or female, and therefore corresponds conveniently with the analogous usage of the term "come" in English. In this interpretation, the expression as a whole would mean something like "when the arrival of the sperm induces a tingling sensation, one will experience a climax." I have translated this passage in such a way as to suggest this interpretation while retaining some of the ambiguity of the original.

22. A variant of this four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ctiü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:814, l. 20; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 12, p. 50, l. 1.

23. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 15, n. 1.

24. Ibid., chap. 20, n. 16.

25. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 7, p. 76, l. 3.

26. This proverbial saying occurs four times in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 20, ll. 12–13; ch. 7, p. 114, l. 6; vol. 2, ch. 28, p. 438, l. 3; and vol. 4, ch. 103, p. 1586, l. 5; and, in a variant form, in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 88, p. 1135, ll. 9–10.

27. This example of wordplay depends on the fact that the Chinese term for "adopted daughter" literally means "dry daughter." The last line literally means "she may end up producing some juice," but the word *chih* meaning "juice" puns with the word *chih* meaning "niece or nephew."

28. This example of wordplay involves reversing the first two characters of the word *kan-erh-tzu*, meaning "adopted son," which would produce the expression *erh-kan-tzu*, which, in turn, sounds rather like *erh-ken-tzu*, literally "two organs," which is a slang term for a hermaphrodite.

29. This elaborate example of wordplay is made up of four familiar phrases, *Wang Chiang-nan*, the name of a lyric tune meaning "Gazing toward the Southland"; *pa-shan hu-erh*, a term for a mountain chair, and also for a type of ivy, meaning "mountain climbing tiger"; *Han-tung shan*, the name of a song tune meaning "The Mountains East of the Han River"; and *hsieh-wen pu*, a term for a type of twill meaning "diagonally patterned fabric." The first characters of these four phrases, *wang pa han hsieh*, mean nothing in combination with each other but pun with the expression *wang-pa han-hsieh*, which means "the cuckold is delirious." I have tried to render something of the effect of this example of wordplay by choosing four familiar English phrases the first words of which, "cock" "hold" and "dillar" "yes," sound something like "cuckold" and "delirious."

30. This example of a *hsieh-hou yü* calls for putting the characters *kuei* and *yu*, the right- and left-hand components of the character *ch'ou*, meaning "ugly" or "ugliness," on a pushcart: the better to "parade one's ugliness." I have tried to suggest this by punning "ugly" "niece" with "ugliness."

31. Ts'ao-chou was the seat of a strategically important Military Defense Circuit in Ming times. It was located in western Shantung in the area where the provinces of Shantung,

Honan, Anhui, and Kiangsu come together. Because of its importance, the extent of the circuit intendant's jurisdiction became proverbial. A variant of the same *hsieh-hou yü* recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 42, p. 6a, l. 7.

32. This line occurs in *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 639, p. 14b, l. 2; and in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 32, p. 367, l. 15.

33. These were a type of confection, made of sugar, flour, and butterfat, shaped or molded into a swirled conical shape, like that of an abalone shell. They were crisp in texture but melted in the mouth. This type of confection is mentioned as being popular in Hang-chou, the capital of the Southern Sung dynasty, as early as the thirteenth century. See *Meng-liang lu* (Record of the millet dream), comp. Wu Tzu-mu (13th century), preface dated 1274, in *Tung-ching meng-hua lu [wai ssu-chung]* (A dream of past splendors in the Eastern Capital [plus four other works]), comp. Meng Yüan-lao (12th century) et al. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1956), *chüan* 6, p. 182, l. 4; *chüan* 13, p. 243, l. 3; and *chüan* 16, p. 266, l. 13; and *Wu-lin chiu-shih* (Former events in Hang-chou), comp. Chou Mi (1232–98), in ibid, *chüan* 2, p. 370, l. 16; and *chüan* 6, p. 445, l. 16.

34. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:429, l. 8; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 33, p. la, ll. 9–10.

35. This formulaic couplet occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:740, ll. 7–8; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 46, p. 134, l. 4; *Chang Yü-hu wu-su nü-chen kuan*, scene 2, p. 605, ll. 7–8; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Li Jih-hua), scene 19, p. 52, l. 10; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 3b, l. 8. Variants occur in *[Chiao-ting] Yüan-k'an tsa-chü san-shih chung*, p. 171, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1037, l. 2; *Su Wu mu-yang chi, chüan* 1, scene 10, p. 24b, l. 7; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 22, p. 95, l. 3. The first line occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:816, l. 16. The second line occurs independenty in a lyric by Han Shih-chung (1089–1151), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1032, upper register, l. 12; *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 14, p. 78, l. 8; *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 2, scene 5, p. 92, l. 10; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:601, l. 16; the early vernacular story entitled *Chien-t'ieh ho-shang* (The Monk's billet-doux), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 8, l. 8; *Chung-ch'ing li-chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 7a, l. 12; and *Tien-yüan ch'i-yü*, vol. 3, *chüan* 7, p. 22a, l. 5.

CHAPTER 33

1. This line recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 5a, l. 6.

2. This line has already occurred in ibid, vol. 2, ch. 32, p. la, l. 6.

3. This line is based on a famous passage in Book 7 of the *Lun-yü*, which Arthur Waley translates as follows: "The Master said to Yen Hui, The maxim

> When wanted, then go;
> When set aside; then hide.

is one that you and I could certainly fulfil." See Waley, *The Analects of Confucius*, p. 124.

4. The opening and closing couplets of this poem are derived, with some textual variation, from one by Shao Yung (1011–77). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 7:4465, ll. 7–8.

5. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Sha-kou chi*, scene 6, p. 13, l. 10; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 19, p. 278, l. 13; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 31, p. 360, l. 4; and *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 1, p. 3a, l. 10.

6. This formulaic four-character expression occurs three times in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 40, p. 464, l. 17; vol. 2, ch. 61, p. 704, l. 13; and ch. 91, p. 1038, l. 3.

7. This four-character expression occurs together with the following line in a lyric by Ch'eng Chieh-chai (Sung dynasty), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 5:3548, upper register, l. 1. It also occurs in a poem by Ch'en Keng (1190–1274), *Ch'üan Chin shih* (Complete poetry of the Chin dynasty [111 5–1234]), comp. Hsüeh Jui-chao and Kuo Ming-chih, 4 vols. (Tientsin: Nan-k'ai ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1995), 3:439, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:902, l. 10; and 3:1093, l. 12; *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 425, l. 1; *Su Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi, chüan* 1, scene 13, p. 26b, l. 6; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 30, l. 9; and *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 2, p. 4a, l. 9.

8. This four-character expression occurs in *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 22, p. 54, l. 9.

9. A variant form of these four lines, the last two of which are virtually identical, occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi*, vol. 3, *chüan* 10, p. 35a, l. 16-p. 35b, l. 1.

10. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 21b, ll. 6–7.

11. A variant of this four-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 51, p. 19a, l. 5.

12. This was a prominent architectural feature of a monastery of the same name in Peking during the Ming dynasty. See *Wan-shu tsa-chi, chüan* 19, p. 224, ll. 12–13; and *Ti-ching ching-wu lüeh, chüan* 4, pp. 182–83.

13. Shen Wan-san (14th century) is reputed to have been the richest man in Nanking at the time of the founding of the Ming dynasty and to have contributed significantly to the costs of building the city wall of the new capital. His wealth was legendary and is reputed to have equaled that of the state itself. See L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, eds., *Dictionary of Ming Biography,* 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2:1179. For a sampling of the legends about this figure, see *Yün-chiao kuan chi-t'an* (Recorded conversations from the Cloudy Plantain Studio), by K'ung Erh (15th century), in *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng*, 1st series, vol. 2952, pp. 7–14; *Liu-ch'ing jih-cha*, vol. 3, *chüan* 35, pp. la-2b; and Wu *tsa-tsu, chüan* 3, p. 70, ll. 7–11.

14. A variant of these two lines recurs in conjunction with the following couplet in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 4b, l. 11.

15. The notion that the relationship between a man's conduct and his reputation is analogous to that between a tree and its shadow is emphasized in *Hsün-tzu*. See *Hsün-tzu yin-te*, ch. 11, p. 42, ll. 16–18; and ch. 12, p. 47, ll. 11 and 13; and Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 2:166 and 186. Close variants of this proverbial couplet occur in a song lyric by Chin Luan (1494–1583), *Chuan Ming san-chu*, 2:1606, l. 6; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 3, p. 171, ll. 3–4; and recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 2a, l. 1; ch. 72, p. 5a, l. 1; and vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 10b, ll. 8–9. The last line also occurs independently in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 17a, ll. 10–11.

16. This expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 9b, l. 6.

17. The four songs that follow are examples of a type of literary jeu d'esprit in which virtually every line of a poetic composition contains the name of a fruit, a flower, a drug, a coin, a song tide, or any other category of nomenclature that appeals to the poet's fancy. The earliest extant works of this kind date from the Six Dynasties period (222–589), but they became increasingly common in both elite and popular literature during the Sung dynasty (960–1279).

18. The "Oath in the Peach Orchard" is the name of a famous episode in the first chapter of the novel *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*. See ibid., vol. 1, *chüan* 1, pp. 4–5; and *Three Kingdoms*, trans. Moss Roberts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 8–10.

19. “Peach” is a slang word for a detective. See Eric Partridge, A *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* (New York: Macmillan, 1984), p. 862.

20. It was a folk belief that the chattering of magpies presaged a happy event. This expression occurs as early as the T’ang dynasty. See *K’ai-yüan T’ien-pao i-shih, chüan* 2, p. 103, l. 6.

21. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 8, n. 10.

22. This formulaic four-character expression refers to a proverbial trysting place for lovers. See, e.g., a lyric by K’ang Yu-chih (12th century), *Ch’üan Sung tz’u*, 2:1307, upper register, l. 11; *Yüan-ch’ü hsüan*, 1:30, l. 3; 2:709, l. 11; 3:1097, l. 9; 3:1155, l. 20; 4:1356, l. 7; *Yüan-ch’ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:656, l. 20; *Cho Wen-chün ssu-pen Hsiang-ju*, scene 4, p. 139, ll. 1–2; and Su *Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi, chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 15b, l. 5.

23. For an illustrated description of the process by which Chinese coins were minted, see *T’ien-kung k’ai-wu* (The exploitation of the works of nature), by Sung Ying-hsing (1587-c. 1666) (Hong Kong: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1978), *chüan* 8, pp. 224–28; and *T’ien-kung k’ai-wu: Chinese Technology in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. E-tu Zen Sun and Shiou-chuan Sun (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1966), pp. 165–69.

24. The word “mopus” is a slang term for a moping, or a dull, stupid, person; but it can also refer to a small coin. See Partridge, A *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, p. 753.

25. The English word “sycee” for a silver “shoe” or ingot is derived from a dialect pronunciation of the first two syllables of the Chinese term *hsi-ssu wen-yin* (fine silk pattern silver). See Lien-sheng Yang, *Money and Credit in China: A Short History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 46–47.1 use it here as a pun on the word “size.”

26. Ministry of War Hollow was the name of a street southwest of the Forbidden City in Ming dynasty Peking that is still called by the same name today. See Hsü P’ing-fang, *Ming-Ch’ing Pei-ching ch’eng t’u* (Maps of the city of Pei-ching during the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties) (Peking: Ti-t’u ch’u-pan she, 1986), p. 26.

27. The term *kuan-yin* (government silver), which I have translated as “legal tender,” puns with the name of Kuan-yin, the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy.

28. The word “brockage” is a technical term for a coin inadvertently struck with either two obverses or two reverses, one of which is normal but the other of which is reversed. See R. Scott Carlton, *The International Encyclopædic Dictionary of Numismatics* (Iola, Wis.: Krause Publications, 1996), p. 33.

29. The term K’ai-yüan refers to a famous coin, first issued in the year 621, which bore the inscription *k’ai-yüan t’ung-pao* (circulating treasure which opens a new era). See Yang, *Money and Credit in China*, pp. 24–25.

30. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 2, p. 5a, l. 1.

31. The four characters that I have rendered as “jingling cash” read *hsiang-t’ung hsiang-yüan*, emending *tao* to *t’ung*, which it somewhat resembles orthographically. These two compounds represent possible ways of reading the inscriptions on certain Annamese coins of the early eleventh century, which may also have circulated in China. See the sources cited in Arthur Braddan Coole, *An Encyclopedia of Chinese Coins*, Volume 1: A *Bibliography on Far Eastern Numismatology and a Coin Index* (Mission, Kan.: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1967), pp. 462–63. For illustrations of these coins, see *Ku-ch’ien ta tz’u-tien* (Great encyclopedia on ancient coinage), comp. Ting Fu-pao (Shanghai: I-hsüeh shu-chü, 1938), *ts’e* 6, pp. 31 la–

12a. But these four characters also pun on the expression *hsiang-t'ung hsiang-yüan*, which can be translated as "jingling cash."

32. The word *lu* (furnace) can also mean mint.

33. The term *o-yen*, or "goose-eyes," was used to designate a debased type of coinage issued in the year 465, because the coins were no bigger than a goose's eye. See Peng Xinwei, A *Monetary History of China*, trans. Edward H. Kaplan, 2 vols. (Bellingham: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 1993), 1:221. It also puns with the expressions o-yen, or *o-yen*, meaning "unfriendly eyes," or "hungry eyes," either one of which would be appropriate to this context.

34. The term "elm-pod cash" was used to designate a type of flimsy lightweight coin that circulated in the second century B.C. See ibid., 1:103.

35. The term *i-t'iao kun* (bare stick) was used to designate a type of debased cash produced by the Peking mint in 1562. See Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China, 1000–1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 105.

36. The term *hsüan-pien* (milled rim) was used to designate high-quality cash minted by the Peking mint during the Chia-ching reign period (1522–66) that were highly regarded for their smooth and even rims. See ibid., p. 105.

37. The term *huo-ch'i* (baked lacquer) was used to designate a grade of cash minted at the Nanking mint that had a dark "smoked" color. See ibid.

38. I take the character *sha* in the term *hei-sha* (black sand) to be short for *sha-pan* (sand-plate), a derogatory word for debased cash adulterated with sand. See Yang, *Money and Credit in China*, p. 32.

39. The word "mule" is a technical term for a coin made from mismatched dies. See Carlton, *The International Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Numismatics*, pp. 199–200.

40. The term *chin-pei* (gold-back) was used to designate a high-quality grade of cash produced by the Nanking mint from a refined copper alloy. See von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune*, p. 105.

41. This is a traditional Chinese remedy for hemorrhaging. See *Chung-yao ta tz'u-tien* (Comprehensive dictionary of the Chinese pharmacopoeia), comp. Chiang-su hsin i-hsüeh yüan (Kiangsu New Medical Academy), 3 vols. (Hong Kong: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1978), 2:1897, item 3903. The same term occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 69, p. 786, l. 2.

42. This proverbial four-character expression occurs as early as the Han dynasty. See *Feng-su t'ung-i [chiao-chu]*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 99, l. 10. It also occurs in *San-kuo chih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 39, p. 983, l. 11; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 17, p. 817, l. 25; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan tung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 12a, l. 7; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 77, p. 1b, l. 10.

43. This proverbial four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-hu yu-lan chih-yü* (Supplement to the Guide to the West Lake), comp. T'ien Ju-ch'eng (cs 1526) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1958), *chüan* 21, p. 385, l. 14; and in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 25, p. 291, l. 16.

44. This proverbial four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1158, l. 14; and 4:1546, l. 8; the anonymous Yüan-Ming tsa-chü drama *Shou-t'ing hou nu chan Kuan P'ing* (The Marquis of Shou-fing angrily executes Kuan P'ing), in *Ku-pen Yüan Ming tsa-chü*, vol. 3, scene 1, p. 2b, l. 9; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 30, l. 11; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 61, p. 1021, l. 7; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 39b, l. 9; *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih-*

chuan, chüan 1, p. 47b, l. 3 *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 38, p. 436, l. 10; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 9, p. 115, ll. 5–6; and *Yang chia fu shih-tai chung-yung yen-i chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 7, p. 28a, l. 5. Variants of these four lines also occur together in *Yü-chüeh chi*, scene 3, p. 4, l. 12; and in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 2a, ll. 2–3.

45. This colorful expression for the ostentatious clothing affected by a scoundrel occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:195, l. 13; 4:1347, l. 15; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:23, l. 8.

46. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 98, p. 5a, l. 11.

47. For this article of the Ming penal code, see *Ming-tai lü-li hui-pien*, vol. 2, *chüan* 25, p. 936, ll. 3–4.

48. The expression *p'a-hui* (to crawl in the crud) is a slang term for a father-in-law's illicit sexual relations with his daughter-in-law. There are different explanations for the meaning of this term, but the most likely is that if one crawls in the crud he will dirty his knees (*wu-hsi*), which is homophonous with the expression *wu-hsi* meaning to defile one's daughter-in-law. See Yao ling-hsi, *P'ing-wai chih-yen* (Flowing words outside the vase) (Tientsin: T'ien-chin shu-chü, 1940), p. 188; and *Wu-hsia yen-lien* (Aphoristic couplets from Su-chou), by Wang Yu-kuang (early 19th century), originally published in 1820 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1982), *chüan* 1, p. 5, ll. 2–4; and *chüan* 4, p. 103, l. 13-p. 104, l. 1.

49. The penalty for this crime was decapitation. See *Ming-tai lü-li hui-pien*, vol. 2, *chüan* 25, p. 936, ll. 4–5.

50. This proverbial couplet is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. Variants occur in *Shih-lin kuang-chi, ts'e 2, ch'ien-chi, chüan* 9, p. 6b, l. 7; *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 1, p. 11a, l. 5; *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 10, p. 57, ll. 6–7; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:145, ll. 17–18; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 29, p. 165, l. 13; *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 1, scene 14, p. 27a, ll. 2–3; *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 11, p. 32, l. 6; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 35, p. 116, ll. 11–12; *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 3:873, l. 12; and *Mu-tan t'ing*, scene 49, p. 244, l. 16.

51. A close variant of this four-character expression occurs in a poem by Po Chü-i (772–846), *Chuan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 450, p. 5087, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1027, l. 21; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 9, p. 446, ll. 17–18. It occurs in the same form as in the novel in a poem by Chao Fan (1143–1229), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 49:30763, l. 10; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 144, l. 24; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 37a, l. 2; and *Liu sheng mi Lien chi*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 10b, l. 3.

52. A close variant of this four-character expression occurs in a ritual hymn attributed to the Han dynasty, *Yüeh-fu shih-chi*, vol. 1, *chüan* 12, p. 176, l. 16; and *K'ai-yüan T'ien-pao i-shih, chüan* 2, p. 103, l. 8.

53. The locus classicus of this formulaic four-character expression, in a slightly variant form, occurs in a speech attributed to Han Hsin (d. 196 B.C.) in the *Shih-chi*, vol. 8, *chüan* 92, p. 2622, l. 12. It occurs in the same form as in the text in *Wei-shu* (History of the Northern Wei dynasty), comp. Wei Shou (338–534), 8 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), vol. 3, *chüan* 35, p. 827, l. 14, and is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:596, l. 11; *Su Wu mu-yang chi, chüan* 2, scene 18, p. 7a, l. 3; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 2, p. 206, l. 5; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 34, p. 113, l. 4; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 162, l. 5; *Chuan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. *2, chüan* 3, p. 27a, l. 2; and *Huan-sha chi*, scene *2*, p. *2*, l. 6.

54. This four-character expression occurs in *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. *2, chüan* 8, p. 36b, l. 7.

55. This formulaic four-character expression occurs as early as the third century B.C. See *Kuan-tzu chiao-cheng, chüan* 6, ch. 16, p. 91, l. 4; and *chüan* 11, ch. 31, p. 174, l. 7. It also occurs in *Shih-chi*, vol. 8, *chüan*, 97, p. 2698, l. 7; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 9, p. 422, ll. 10–11.

56. This four-character expression occurs in *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 19b, l. 1.

57. This four-character expression occurs in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 1, p. 7b, l. 4; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:295, l. 10; 2:552, l. 9; and 4:1419, l. 15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:372, l. 16; and 3:812, l. 17; *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 1, scene 5, p. 8b, l. 7; and *Hsün-ch'in chi*, scene 6, p. 20, l. 5.

58. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 19, p. 880, l. 9; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 62b, l. 2; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 38, l. 15.

CHAPTER 34

1. This formulaic four-character expression literally means "show the black pupils of the eyes to some extent." This is derived from a passage in the biography of Juan Chi (210–63) in which it is alleged that he revealed his contempt for conventional people by showing them the whites of his eyes but gazed directly at those whom he respected, thus showing them the black pupils of his eyes. See *Chin shu*, vol. 5, *chüan* 49, p. 1361, ll. 6–8; and Donald Holzman, *Poetry and Politics: The Life and Works of Juan Chi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p. 80. The same expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:363, l. 2; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 34, p. 4a, l. 8; vol. 3, ch. 58, p. 4a, l. 1; and ch. 60, p. 2b, l. 1.

2. A close variant of this four-character expression occurs in the *Shu-ching* in a passage that James Legge translates as follows: "A prince … should not value strange things…. Even dogs and horses which are not native to his country he will not keep; fine birds and strange animals he will not nourish in his kingdom." See Legge, *The Shoo King or The Book of Historical Documents*, p. 349. This variant also occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 9, p. 23a, ll. 7–8; and in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 26a, l. 7. The expression occurs in the same form as in the novel in *Huang-ch'ao pien-nien kang-mu pei-yao*, vol. 2, *chüan* 28, p. 27a, l. 14; *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 32, l. 10; and *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 241, l. ll. In all three of these cases it refers to the extravagant taste for exotica on the part of Emperor Hui-tsung (r. 1100–25) of the Sung dynasty, the ruler in whose reign the story of the novel is set.

3. This four-character expression occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 9, p. 23a, l. 7; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 73, p. 830, l. 11.

4. This type of chair was named after its putative designer, Su Shih (1037–1101), one of whose courtesy names was Tung-p'o. For pictures of what such a chair looked like, see Craig Clunas, *Chinese Furniture* (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 1997), pp. 27–28; and Wang Shixiang, *Classic Chinese Furniture: Ming and Early Qing Dynasties*, trans. Sarah Handler and Wang Shixiang (Chicago: Art Media Resources, 1991), pp. 104–107.

5. For this term, see Klaas Ruitenbeek, *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China: A Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenters Manual Lu Ban jing* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), p. 258, n. 267. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 49, p. 15a, l. 5.

6. For an illustration of this type of furniture leg, see the drawing in Wang Shixiang, *Classic Chinese Furniture*, p. 26.

7. For an illustration of what such a marble panel in a tabletop may have looked like, see ibid., p. 171.

8. This person's given name is not mentioned in the novel, but sufficient evidence is supplied to identify him as Ts'ai T'iao (d. after 1137), one of the sons of Ts'ai Ching, although the historical record does not indicate whether or not he was his fourth son. See *Sung shih*, vol. 39, *chüan* 472, p. 13726, l. 15; and p. 13728, l. 5.

9. This is the only mention of this person in the novel. Although in the Cast of Characters I have identified him as Ts'ai T'ao (d. after 1147), the evidence is not sufficient to determine which of Ts'ai Ching's sons is intended.

10. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Hai-p'eng (11th century) in *Wu-teng Hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 14, p. 880, l. 9; a poem by the Buddhist monk Fa-yen (d. 1104) in *Ku tsun-su yü-lu* (The recorded sayings of eminent monks of old), comp. Tse Tsang-chu (13th century), in *Hsü Tsang-ching*, vol. 118, *chüan 22*, p. 224b, upper register, l. 5; and occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g. *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 111, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 17, p. 249, l. 9; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan tung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 2, p. 5a, l. 12; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 17a, l. 2; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 87a, l. 13; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 76, p. 875, l. 9; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 7, ch. 58, p. 5a, l. 10; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 37, l. 11.

11. On the five mourning relationships, see T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Law and Society in Traditional China* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1961), pp. 15–20; and the table in *Ming-tai lü-li hui-pien*, 1:24–25.

12. This four-character expression occurs in *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 126, l. 1; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:20, l. 18; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:599, ll. 4–5; and *Chao-shih ku-erh chi, chüan* 1, scene 15, p. 28b, l. 1.

13. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan* 2, p. 96b, l. 3; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p. 51, l. 12; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 3, p. 34a, l. 13; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 27b, l. 5; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 1 la, l. 11; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 31, p. 355, ll. 9–10; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 8, ch. 66, p. 6a, l. 7.

14. Variants of this *hsieh-hou yü* occur in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 87, p. 991, l. 16; and in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 9a, ll. 7–8. The second line occurs independently in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 83, p. 1066, l. 9.

15. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a poem by Jung Yü (c. 744-c. 800). See *Ts'ai-tiao chi* (An anthology of brilliant verse), comp. Wei Hu (10th century), in *T'ang-jen hsüan T'ang-shih [shih-chung]* (Anthologies of T'ang poetry selected by T'ang figures [ten examples]) (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), *chüan* 8, p. 618, l. 12. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Ch'in ping liu-kuo p'ing-hua*, p. 36, l. *7; Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1135, l. 19; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:242, l. 9; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 43, p. 704, ll. 13–14; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 44, p. 516, l. 6; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 73, p. 942, l. 7. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 93, p. 11b, l. 1.

16. On the Middle Primordial Festival, the Taoist name for the Ghost Festival of Chinese popular religion, see Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 35–40, and passim.

17. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Shou-t'ing hou nu chan Kuan P'ing*, scene 3, p. 10a, l. 4; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 67, p. 1138, l. 4.

18. As pointed out by Patrick Hanan in his monograph entitled "Sources of the *Chin P'ing Mei*," *Asia Major*, n.s. vol. 10, part 1 (1963): 35–36, the story of the fatal tryst between Juan the Third and Miss Ch'en is derived, with substantial modification, from the middle-period vernacular story entitled *Chieh-chih-erh chi*. See *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, pp. 244–71.

19. This line is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:843, l. 14; *Nü ku-ku shuo-fa sheng-t'ang chi*, scene 2, p. 8a, l. 11; and *Pao-chien chi*, scene 14, p. 30, ll. 18–19.

20. This four-character expression occurs in an analogous context in the *Ch'ang-hen ko* (Song of everlasting sorrow), by Po Chü-i (772–846). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 435, p. 4819, l. 13.

21. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Ch'ao Pu-chih (1053–1110), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:578, upper register, l. 12; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:371, l. 9; *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 3:1021, l. 8; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 1, p. 13, l. 3.

22. This auspicious motif is intended to symbolize an unbroken succession of descendants.

23. This proverbial couplet, with numerous variations, is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., the early vernacular story Lü *Tung-pin fei-chien chan Huang-lung* (Lü Tung-pin beheads Huang-lung with his flying sword), in *Hsing-shih heng-yen*, vol. 2, *chüan* 21, p. 455, l. 9; *K'an p'i-hsüeh tan-cheng Erh-lang Shen*, p. 245, l. 9; *Jen hsiao-tzu lieh-hsing wei shen*, p. 580, l. 3; *Ching-chung chi*, scene 10, p. 23, l. 5; *Hsün-ch'in chi*, scene 7, p. 21, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 20, p. 298, l. 2; and vol. 3, ch. 67, p. 1146, l. 10; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 6, p. 17, l. 13; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 93, p. 1056, ll. 8–9.

CHAPTER 35

1. The four-character expression that I have translated as "idle gossipmongering" literally means "idle pros and cons." It occurs in *Nü lun-yü* (The female analects), by Sung Jo-shen (d. c. 820), in *Lü-ch'uang nü-shih* (Female scribes of the green gauze windows), 7 vols., fac. repr. of late Ming edition, in *Ming-Ch'ing shan-pen hsiao-shuo ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-pien*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 8a, l. 3; a lyric by Ts'ao Kuan (cs 1154), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1531, lower register, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:924, l. 5; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 640, p. 11b, ll. 7–8; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 2, scene 28, p. 39a, l. 2; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 307, l. 10.

2. Versions of this poem, with some textual variants, occur in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan* 2, p. 4b, ll. 7–10; and *Ta-T'ang Ch'in-wang tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, ch. 18, p. 13a, 11.7–9.

3. This four-character expression occurs in *Ho-t'ung wen-tzu chi*, p. 34, ll. 12–13.

4. This four-character expression occurs in *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu, chia-chi, chüan 2*, p. 6b, l. 5.

5. This four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 69, p. 1176, l. 15; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 82, p. 933, l. 15.

6. This four-character expression occurs under the year 626 in the *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* (Comprehensive mirror for aid in government), comp. Ssu-ma Kuang (1019–86), 4 vols. (Peking: Ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1957), vol. 3, *chüan* 192, p. 6022, l. 1. It also occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 67, p. 1138, l. 14; and *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 30b, l. 2.

7. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 3b, l. 11.

8. This four-character expression occurs in *Nü ku-ku shuo-fa sheng-t'ang chi*, scene 4, p. 15a, l. 6; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 205, l. 7.

9. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:847, l. 12; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 68, p. 1152, l. 4.

10. For a description of how this type of candy was made, see *T'ien-kung k'ai-wu, chüan* 6, pp. 169–70; and Sun and Sun, *T'ien-kung k'ai-wu*, p. 129.

11. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan* 1, p. 15a, l. 7; *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 3, p. 67, l. 13; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:671, l. 7; and *Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 432, l. 7.

12. The *tou-niu* is a subspecies of dragon, the distinguishing characteristic of which is that its horns curve down and around like those of a water buffalo. Robes featuring this design were conferred by imperial favor on meritorious officials during the Ming dynasty. Edicts prohibiting the wearing of such robes by persons who were not entitled to them were issued in 1458, 1503, and 1537 but failed to prevent the practice. See *Chung-kuo i-kuan fu-shih ta tz'u-tien* (Comprehensive dictionary of Chinese costume and its decorative motifs), comp. Chou Hsün and Kao Ch'un-ming (Shanghai: Shanghai tz'u-shu ch'u-pan she, 1996), p. 784. For a picture of a *tou-niu* design, with its curving horns, taken from an excavated Ming costume, see ibid., p. 606.

13. Mount T'ai in Shantung province, the easternmost of the five sacred mountains of China, was a popular destination for religious pilgrimages as well as tourist sightseeing and remains so to this day. For two seventeenth-century accounts of pilgrimages to Mount T'ai, one fictional and the other nonfictional, see Glen Dudbridge, "Women Pilgrims to T'ai Shan: Some Pages from a Seventeenth-Century Novel," and Pei-yi Wu, "An Ambivalent Pilgrim to T'ai Shan in the Seventeenth Century," in *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*, ed. Susan Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 39–64 and 65–88.

14. The Princess Mao-te (fl. early 12th century) was the fifth daughter of Emperor Hui-tsung and was married to Ts'ai Ching's son, Ts'ai T'iao. See *Sung shih*, vol. 25, *chüan* 248, p. 8783, l. 7; and vol. 39, *chüan* 472, p. 13726, l. 15.

15. This date corresponds to the year 1115 in the Western calendar.

16. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 71, p. 808, l. 5; and *Shuang-lieh chi*, scene 25, p. 70, l. 4.

17. The expression *shu-shu*, which I have translated as "sweetie," is an informal word for glutinous sorghum, a grain that is used to make syrup and candy, to ferment wine, and to distill spirits. It was used in the sixteenth century as a slang term for a catamite. It also occurs in this usage in *Ssu-sheng yüan*, p. 47, l. 13.

18. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 45, p. 7b, l. 1; and vol. 4, ch. 64, p. 6b, l. 10.

19. This four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Shou-ch'u (910–90), in *Ku tsun-su yü-lu, chüan* 38, p. 326a, lower register, l. 3.

20. A variant of this proverbial expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Ch'ung-hsien (980–1052). See *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 15, p. 995, l. 9. Similar variants occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:347, l. 7; and 2:653, l. 19; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*,

2:373, l. 1; *Wan Hsiu-niang ch'ou-pao shan-t'ing-erh*, p. 565, l. 8; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 56, p. 718, l. 10. It recurs in the same form as it does here in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 1b, l. 5; and ch. 85, p. 8b, l. 11.

21. This formulaic imprecation occurs in *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 10, p. 25, l. 1. It also recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 9b, l. 1; and vol. 5, ch. 84, p. 4a, l. 9.

22. This four-character expression occurs in the *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 205, l. 7.

23. The compound *t'i-ch'iu*, which means "kickball," puns with two other characters that could mean "to manipulate the penis."

24. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 194, l. 3; and in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 53, p. 608, l. 10. It recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 96, p. 2a, l. 6.

25. This four-character expression occurs in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Tuan-fa chi* (The severed tresses), by Li K'ai-hsien (1502–68), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, wu-chi* (Collectanea of rare editions of traditional drama, fifth series) (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1986), item 2, *chüan* 1, scene 2, p. 4b, l. 8.

26. A close variant of this couplet occurs in *Hsien-ch'ing ou-chi* (Casual expressions of idle feeling), by Li Yü (1610–80), first published in 1671, in a passage on the need for actors to attain verisimilitude in their portrayal of characters. This is the most important treatise on play writing and dramatic performance in Chinese literature. See ibid., in *Li Yü ch'üan-chi* (The complete works of Li Yü), 20 vols. (Hang-chou: Che-chiang ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1992), vol. 3, *chüan* 3, p. 154, l. 4.

27. This line also occurs as the first line in an anonymous Ming song suite that is probably earlier in date. See *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, p. 546, l. 8.

28. This southern-style song is the first of a quartet of songs to the same tune by Li Jih-hua (fl. early 16th century). Versions of it are preserved in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 10a, ll. 5–7; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2390, ll. 3–5; *Nan-kung tz'u-chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 4, p. 197, ll. 5–6; *Nan-tz'u yün-hsüan* (An anthology of southern-style song lyrics arranged by rhyme), comp. Shen Ching (1553–1610), ed. Cheng Ch'ien (Taipei: Pei-hai ch'u-pan kung-ssu, 1971), *chüan* 11, p. 58, ll. 12–13; *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya, chüan 2*, p. 57b, ll. 6–8; *Tz'u-lin i-hsiang* (Lingering notes from the forest of song), comp. Hsü Yü (fl. early 17th century), preface dated 1623, fac. repr. in *Shan-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an*, vols. 17–18, *chüan 2*, pp. 50a, l. 9–50b, l. 2; and *Wu-sao ho-pien* (Combined anthology of the songs of Wu), comp. Chang Ch'i (fl. early 17th century) and Chang Hsü-ch'u (fl. early 17th century), preface dated 1637, 4 *ts'e*, fac. repr. (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1934), *ts'e* 1, *chüan* 1, p. 46b, ll. 6–8. The version of this song in the novel is closest to those in *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya* and *Tz'u-lin i-hsiang*.

29. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1341, l. 17; *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 3, p. 123, l. 9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:74, l. 18; a song lyric by Hsü Yen (d. 1301), in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:81, l. 2; *Cho Wen-chün ssu-pen Hsiang-ju*, scene 2, p. 120, l. 3; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 52, p. 95, ll. 5–6; and *Chin-lien chi*, scene 3, p. 8, l. 10. It also recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 19b, ll. 3–4; and vol. 4, ch. 68, p. 16a, l. 5.

30. A close variant of this line occurs in *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 18, p. 52, l. 6.

31. Hsiao-man was the name of a dancer patronized by Po Chü-i (772–846), who admired her for her lissome waist. Her name has become proverbial for a slim waist. See

Pen-shih shih (The original incidents of poems), comp. Meng Ch'i (cs 875), preface dated 886 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1959), *chüan 2*, p. 14, ll. 10–14.

32. This four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Wei-mo-chieh ching chiang-ching wen* (Sutra lecture on the Vimalaklrti sutra), text no. 1, in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 2:557, l. 12; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:504, l. 19; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 3, p. 7, l. 7; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 22, p. 70, l. 3; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), scene 34, p. 406, l. 19; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 215, l. 11; *Shuang-lieh chi*, scene 7, p. 20, l. 11; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 52, p. 673, l. 14.

33. This southern-style song is the second of a quartet of songs by Li Jih-hua (fl. early 16th century). Versions of it are preserved in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 10a, ll. 8–10; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2390, ll. 6–8; *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya, chüan* 2, p. 58a, ll. 1–3; *Tz'u-lin i-hsiang, chüan 2*, p. 50b, ll. 4–6; and *Nan-yin san-lai* (Three kinds of southern sound), comp. Ling Meng-ch'u (1580–1644), 4 *ts'e*, fac. repr. of late Ming edition (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi shu-tien, 1963), *ts'e 2*, p. 73a, ll. 9–11. The version in the novel is closest to those in the *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya, Tz'u-lin i-hsiang*, and *Nan-yin san-lai*.

34. The four-character phrase meaning "the phoenix trees by the gilded wellhead" occurs in a poem by Wang Ch'ang-ling (cs 727), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 2, *chüan* 143, p. 1445, l. 8; a quatrain attributed to a concubine of Lu Yu (1125–1210), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 41:25745, l. 3; a song lyric by Hsü Yen (d. 1301), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:81, l. 10; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 24, p. 276, l. 5.

35. This line alludes to a famous poem by Lu K'ai (5th century). See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:460, note 31. For a translation of this poem by Hans H. Frankel and a definitive discussion of the problems it presents, see Maggie Bickford et al., *Bones of Jade, Soul of Ice: The Flowering Plum in Chinese Art* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1985), p. 159.

36. This southern-style song is the third of a quartet of songs by Li Jih-hua (fl. early 16th century). Versions of it are preserved in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 10a, l. 11-10b, l. 1; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2390, l. 9–2391, l. 1; *Nan-tz'u yün-hsüan, chüan* 6, p. 34, ll. 14–15; *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya, chüan 2*, p. 58a, ll. 5–7; *Tz'u-lin i-hsiang, chüan 2*, p. 50b, l. 8–51a, l. 1; and *Nan-yin san-lai, ts'e 2*, p. 73a, l. 12–73b, l. 2. In all of these versions, lines 3, 4, and 7 read differently than they do in the novel.

37. This southern-style song is the fourth in a quartet of songs by Li Jih-hua (fl. early 16th century). Versions of it are preserved in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 10b, ll. 2–4; *Ch'ün-yin lei-hsüan*, 4:2391, ll. 2–4; *Wu-yü ts'ui-ya, chüan 2*, p. 58a, l. 9–58b, l. 2; *Tz'u-lin i-hsiang, chüan 2*, p. 51a, ll. 3–5; and *Nan-yin san-lai, ts'e 2*, p. 73b, ll. 3–5.

38. Young Chang is the handsome young lover in *Ying-ying chuan* and its dramatic derivative, *Hsi-hsiang chi*. All the lines quoted in this drinking game allude to this story. It is reported that these quoted lines occur in a Ming work entitled *[Hsin-k'o] Shih-shang hua-yen ch'ü-lo t'an-hsiao chiu-ling* ([Newly printed] Currently fashionable jokes and drinking games to be enjoyed at formal banquets), 4 *chüan* (Ming edition published by the Wen-te T'ang), *chüan* 3, lower register, under the heading "Feng-yüeh ling" (Romantic drinking games). See Huang Lin et al., eds., *Chin P'ing Mei ta tz'u-tien* (Great dictionary of the *Chin P'ing Mei*) (Ch'eng-tu: Pa-Shu shu-she, 1991), p. 999, left column, ll. 21–30.1 have not had access to this work.

39. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a song suite by T'ung-t' ung (14th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-chü*, 2:1263, l. 13; and in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Hung-fu chi* (The

story of Red Duster), by Chang Feng-i (1527–1613), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 21, p. 44, l. 12.

40. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Huang Ch'eng (14th century), *Ch'üan Chin Yüan tz'u* (Complete lyrics of the Chin and Yüan dynasties), comp. T'ang Kuei-chang, 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), 2:924, upper register, l. 7; *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 49, l. 3; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 639, p. 13b, l. 7; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 24, p. 310, l. 12; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 75, l. 7.

41. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Yang Wu-chiu (1097–1171), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1199, lower register, ll. 7–8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:16, l. 19; *T'ien-pao i-shih chu-kung-tiao*, p. 191, l. 4; a song suite by Yang Li-chai (14th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1272, l. 5; and *Pao-chien chi*, scene 28, p. 51, l. 7. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 62, p. 25b, l. 5.

42. This four-character expression occurs in a poem by Po Chü-i (772–846), written in the year 817, *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 440, p. 4899, l. 7. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan* 1, p. 68b, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:386, l. 15; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:565, ll. 1–2; a song suite by Wang Hsiu-fu (13th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:29, l. 7; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 32, p. 101, l. 1; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 4, p. 27, l. 4; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 7, l. 2.

43. This song is by Chu Yu-tun (1379–1439). See his collection of his own nondramatic song lyrics entitled *Ch'eng-chai yüeh-fu* (Popular songs of Sincerity Studio), preface dated 1434, in *Yin-hung I so-k'o ch'ü*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 19a, ll. 6–10. It is also included, without attribution, in *Sheng-shih hsin-sheng*, p. 632, ll. 3–6; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 17, p. 46b, ll. 2–5.

44. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 8, n. 10.

45. The point of this joke depends upon a pun between the terms *hsing-fang* meaning "sexual intercourse" and *hsing-fang* meaning "Office of Justice."

46. This rhyming couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 17b, ll. 3–4.

47. This four-character expression occurs in *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 230, ll. 16–17; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 163, l. 10; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 15a, l. 10; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 1b, l. 12; and *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 54, p. 210, l. 18.

48. This four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *San-kuo chih p'ing-hua* (The p'ing-hua on the history of the Three Kingdoms), originally published in 1321–23 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1955), p. 31, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:391, l. 18; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 7, p. 15, l. 9; *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 17, p. 46, l. 7; *Yü-chüeh chi*, scene 15, p. 46, ll. 1–2; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 132, l. 11; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 18, p. 229, l. 15. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 83, p. 6b, ll. 1–2.

49. A version of this proverbial saying, in which it is the "mouth of a rat" rather than the "mouth of a dog," occurs as early as the fourth century. See *Pao-p'u tzu, wai-p'ien* (outer chapters), ch. 21, p. 139, l. 2. Variants of this idiomatic expression occur in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:130, l. 10; and in an anecdote told of Yü Ch'ien (1398–1457), in *Ku-chin t'an-kai* (A representative selection of anecdotes ancient and modern), comp. Feng Meng-lung (1574–1646), preface dated 1620 (Fu-chou: Hai-hsia wen-i ch'u-pan she, 1985), *chüan* 29, p. 915, l. 1.

50. A variant of this proverbial couplet occurs in an example of repartee recorded in *Erh-t'an: lei-tseng* (Overheard anecdotes: classified and augmented), by Wang T'ung-kuei (fl. late 16th-early 17th century), 54 *chüan*, author's preface dated 1603 (Microfilm copy of a Ming Wan-li [1573–1620] edition in the East Asian Library, University of Chicago), *chüan* 37, p. 12a, l. 9. Another variant, in which the order of the two lines is reversed, is quoted as being current in Nanking in the late sixteenth century in *K'o-tso chui-yü* (Superfluous words of a sojourner), by Ku Ch'i-yüan (1565–1628), author's colophon dated 1618 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1987), *chüan* 1, p. 10, l. 8. The same variant also occurs in an anecdote about Liu Ts'ai (1500–73) in *Ku-chin t'an-kai, chüan* 29, p. 905, ll. 15–16. The version in the novel recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 17a, l. 10.

51. This simile recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 76, p. 21b, l. 9.

52. This proverbial couplet is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 40, p. 174, ll. 7–8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:2, l. 9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:178, ll. 13–14; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 24, p. 90, l. 11; *Pai-t'u chi*, scene 16, p. 49, l. *I; Pai Niang-tzu yung-chen Lei-feng T'a*, p. 435, l. 11; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 103, p. 1587, ll. 3–4; *Shuang-lieh chi*, scene 40, p. 110, l. 2; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 47, p. 613, l. 5. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 38, p. 5b, ll. 6–7; and vol. 5, ch. 98, p. 2b, l. 10. The second line also occurs independently. See, e.g., *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 5, scene 4, p. 199, l. 3; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 22, p. 1066, l. 11; and the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 7b, ll. 10–11.

53. This is the final line of a quatrain by Chu Shu-chen (fl. 1078–1138), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 28:17978, l. 9.

CHAPTER 36

1. Fu-ch'uan and Chien-chiang are the names of a district and river, some distance from each other, in what is now Kwangsi province, in the far southwest of China.

2. This four-character expression occurs in a ballad attributed to a T'ang dynasty poetess named Liu Yao, *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 1, *chüan* 26, p. 357, l. 7: *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:825, l. 18; a lyric by Liu Chi (1311–75), in *Ming-tz'u hui-k'an* (A collectanea of Ming lyrics), comp. Chao Tsun-yüeh, 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1992), 2:1482, p. 52b, l. 3; and *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan 2*, scene 25, p. 385, l. 17.

3. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the Yüan-Ming hsi-wen drama *Pai-yüeh t'ing chi* (Moon prayer pavilion), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 9, *chüan 2*, scene 42, p. 38a, l. 3; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. *2, chüan* 6, p. 15b, l. 3; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 2a, ll. 9–10; *Ta-Sung chung-hsing yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 51a, l. 8; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 146, l. 13; *Yang chia fu shih-tai chung-yung yen-i chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 22b, l. 6; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 65, p. 2a, l. 9; and vol. 5, ch. 98, p. 12b, l. 5.

4. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs twice in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 18a, ll. 7–8; and vol. 5, ch. 91, p. 1b, l. 4.

5. This idiomatic six-character expression recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 71, p. 7a, l. 8.

6. A variant of this couplet occurs in ibid., ch. 70, p. 4b, l. 1.

7. As pointed out by Patrick Hanan, An Ch'en (cs 1103) is a historical figure who protested the selection of a rival candidate as principal graduate in the *chin-shih* examinations of 1103 on the grounds that he was related to a proscribed figure and was

consequently allowed to take his place. See Hanan, "Sources of the *Chin P'ing Mei,*" p. 48; and *Huang-ch'ao pien-nien kang-mu pei-yao*, vol. 2, *chüan* 26, p. 24a, ll. 7–8.

8. An Tun (1042–1104) is a historical figure. For his biography, see *Sung shih*, vol. 39, *chüan* 471, pp. 13717–18.

9. As pointed out by Patrick Hanan, the character Ts'ai Yün is derived from the historical figure Ts'ai Ni (1067–1123), who was designated principal graduate in the *chin-shih* examinations of 1106, became a protégé of Ts'ai Ching, and was appointed to the post of proofreader in the Palace Library. See Hanan, "Sources of the *Chin P'ing Mei,*" pp. 48–49; and the biography of Ts'ai Ni in *Sung shih*, vol. 32, *chüan* 354, pp. 11170–72.

10. This is a quotation from Book 1 of the *Lun-yü*. See *Lun-yü yin-te*, p. 2, book 1, paragraph 15; and Lau, *The Analects*, p. 61.

11. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 2, p. 5, l. 3; and *Sui-T'ang liang-ch'ao shih chuan, chüan* 1, p. 45b, l. 2.

12. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in an obituary inscription for his elder brother by Lou Yüeh (1137–1213), in *Kung-k'uei chi* (Collected works of Kung-k'uei [Lou Yüeh]), 112 *chüan, Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* (Collectanea of [facsimile reproductions from] the four treasuries) ed. (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1929), *chüan* 105, p. 20a, l. 1; and *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 7b, l. 4.

13. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:481, l. 21; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:656, l. 3; a song suite by Liu T'ing-hsin (14th century), in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1430, l. 11; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 8, p. 53, l. 2; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 18, p. 57, l. 1; *P'o-yao chi, chüan 2*, scene 24, p. 20b, l. 9; *Chiao Hung chuan*, p. 298, l. 8; and *Nan Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 22b, l. 3.

14. This song is from *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 6, p. 18, ll. 4–6.

15. The formulaic four-character expression "blue lamp and yellow scrolls" occurs in a poem by Yeh Yung (b. 1300), in *Yüan shih hsüan, ch'u-chi* (An anthology of Yüan poetry, first collection), comp. Ku Ssu-li (1665–1722), 3 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1987), 3:2259, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:425, ll. 13–14; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 25, p. 106, l. 7.

16. Ch'e Yin (d. c. 397) is said, during his impoverished youth, to have captured fireflies in a gauze bag and studied by their light when he could not afford to buy oil for his lamp. See *Chin shu*, vol. 7, *chüan* 83, p. 2177, ll. 6–7.

17. According to a work cited in Li Shan's (c. 630–89) commentary on the *Wen-hsüan*, a certain Sun K'ang of the Chin dynasty (265–420) was so impoverished that he was reduced to studying by the light reflected from the snow. See *Wen-hsüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 38, p. 22b, l. 8.

18. The four-character expression that I have rendered as "three thousand rules of deportment" occurs in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 9, p. 59, l. 6; and *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 16, p. 41, l. 2. A variant of the same expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:106, l. 13.

19. According to a passage from the *Chin yang-ch'iu* (Annals of the Chin dynasty [265–420]), by Sun Sheng (c. 302–73), as quoted in Liu Chün's (465–521) commentary to the *Shih-shuo hsin-yü*, Liu K'un (271–318) and Tsu T'i (266–321) were friendly rivals during their youth, but in a letter to his relatives Liu K'un said, "I am ever afraid that Tsu T'i will apply his whip before I am able to do so." See *Shih-shuo hsin-yü chiao chien*, ch. 8, item 43, p. 335, l. 13. The same four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Hung K'uo (1117–84), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1377, lower register, l. 7.

20. This song immediately follows the preceding one in *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 6, p. 18, ll. 7–8. The introduction of this pair of songs into the *Chin P'ing Mei* is clearly intended to be ironic. In the play from which they are drawn, these songs are sung by the hero Chang Chiu-ch'eng (1092–1159) and his younger brother on their way to the capital to compete in the *chin-shih* examinations. Both of them are paragons of filiality and loyalty who make significant sacrifices in order to maintain their integrity in opposition to corrupt government. In the novel these songs are called for by Ts'ai Yün, who has just sacrificed his integrity in order to obtain success in the examinations by toadying to a corrupt chief minister.

21. The four-character expression "meeting of wind and cloud" refers symbolically to the encounter between a worthy official and a perspicacious ruler. It occurs in a poem by Tu Fu (712–70), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 230, p. 2516, ll. 14–15. It has become ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., a lyric by Chang Lei (1054–1114), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:593, upper register, l. 10; a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Chih-yü (1185–1269), *Hsü-t'ang Ho-shang yü-lu*, p. 984, lower register, l. 14; *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 12, p. 66, l. 8; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 10, p. 29, l. 11; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 20, p. 52, l. 8; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 1, scene 10, p. 29b, l. 6; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 32, p. 107, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 49, p. 817, l. 14; *Nan Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 18b, l. 2; *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 23, p. 61, l. 4; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 87, p. 995, ll. 14–15; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 37, p. 475, l. 12.

22. Lan-t'ien, or Indigo Field, is the name of a place in Shensi province that has been famous since antiquity as a source of precious stones. According to a story included in the *Sou-shen chi* (In search of the supernatural), comp. Kan Pao (d. 336), a certain Yang Po-yung was given some stone seeds by a stranger who told him that if he planted them they would engender jade, with which he would be able to get a good wife; a prophecy that was subsequently fulfilled. See *Sou-shen chi*, comp. Kan Pao, ed. Wang Shao-ying (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1979), *chüan* 11, p. 137, item 285; and *In Search of the Supernatural*, trans. Kenneth J. DeWoskin and J. I. Crump, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 133–34. The four-character expression "jade was planted in Indigo Field" occurs in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 8, p. 24, l. 2. This song is from *Yü-huan chi*, scene 12, p. 41, ll. 6–8.

23. This four-character expression occurs in *P'o-yao chi, chüan 2*, p. 40a, l. 7.

24. This song immediately follows the preceding one in *Yü-huan chi*, scene 12, p. 41, ll. 9–10. This pair of songs is also used for ironic purposes. In the play they are sung by the hero Wei Kao (746–806) and his new bride, the daughter of Chang Yen-shang (727–87), on the occasion of his marrying into his father-in-law's family. Both Wei Kao, a poor but promising scholar, and his chaste bride are models of propriety. In the novel these songs are called for by An Ch'en, who is, to be sure, seeking a new bride like Wei Kao but allows his homoerotic lusts to be aroused by Shu-t'ung, the female impersonator who performs the second song.

25. The term *nan-feng* (southern breeze) is homophonous with the term *nan-feng* meaning a homoerotic orientation.

26. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Liu I-chih (1079–1160), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:795, lower register, l. 3.

27. The blue bird is a traditional carrier of messages between lovers. This four-character expression occurs in *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 8, p. 24, l. 2.

28. It was a traditional belief that fledgling crows returned to feed their mothers after leaving the nest in order to repay them for their former nurture.

29. This line occurs in a lyric by Hou Chih (12th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1427, lower register, l. 5. The song is from *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 2, p. 3, ll. 9–10.

30. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1192, l. 13; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 137, l. 13.

31. Ch'ih-sung tzu, or Master Red Pine, was a legendary immortal of prehistoric times. See Kaltenmark, *Le Lie-sien Tchouan*, pp. 35–42. For Wang-tzu Ch'iao, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 16, n. 7.

32. "The flowers of the cherry trees" is the title of song no. 164 in *The Book of Songs*, a poem that celebrates the importance of the bond of brotherhood. See *Mao-shih yin-te*, pp. 34–35; and Waley, *The Book of Songs*, pp. 203–204.

33. This song immediately follows the preceding one in *Hsiang-nang chi*, scene 2, p. 3, ll. 11–12. In the play these two songs are sung by the hero Chang Chiu-ch'eng and his younger brother on the occasion of their widowed mother's birthday. They are employed for purposes of ironic contrast, as explained in notes 20 and 24 above. For an extended discussion of the multiple ironies involved in the quotations from these two plays in this chapter, see Carlitz, "The Role of Drama in the *Chin P'ing Mei,*" pp. 195–203.

34. These two lines occur together, with an insignificant variant in the first line, in *Huang hsiao-tzu, chüan 2*, scene 24, p. 36a, l. 5. The second line also occurs in *Liu sheng mi Lien chi, chüan* 3, p. 9b, l. 6.

35. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the T'ang dynasty literary tale entitled *Liu I chuan* (The story of Liu I), by Li Ch'ao-wei (fl. late 8th century). See *T'ang Sung ch'uan-ch'i chi*, p. 60, l. 11; and Russell E. McLeod, trans., "The Legendary Marriage at Tung-t'ing," in Ma and Lau, *Traditional Chinese Stories*, p. 352, right column, ll. 20–21. It also occurs in *San-yüan chi*, scene 17, p. 49, l. 10; *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 12a, l. 2; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 11, p. 116, ll. 7–8; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 22, p. 292, l. 10; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 56, l. 3.

36. This four-character expression occurs in *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 8, p. 38b, ll. 10–11.

37. This is the penultimate line in a quatrain from the *Shen-t'ung shih* (Poems by infant prodigies), a popular poetic primer of uplifting pentasyllabic quatrains, at least some of which are traditionally attributed to Wang Chu (cs 1100). Its contents would have been familiar to any literate person in sixteenth-century China. See ibid., in *Chung-kuo ku-tai meng-hsüeh shu ta-kuan* (A corpus of traditional Chinese primers), comp. Lu Yang-t'ao (Shanghai: T'ung-chi ta-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1995), p. 268, l. 10. It also occurs in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 40, p. 218, l. 5; in a set of poems celebrating the story of the play, included in the front matter of the 1498 edition of *Hsi-hsiang chi*, p. 25a, l. 1; and in *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 41, p. 106, l. 7.

38. This is a variant of the final line of the quatrain from the *Shen-t'ung shih* identified in the preceding note.

CHAPTER 37

1. Variants of this formulaic couplet occur in *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 15, p. 41, ll. 8–9; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 22, p. 335, l. 4; the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Chin-chien chi* (The brocade note), by Chou Lü-ching (1549–1640), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* ed. (Taipei: K'ai-ming shu-tien, 1970), scene 18, p. 56, ll. 3–4; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 86, l. 6.

2. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:459, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:813, l. 5; the early vernacular story *Hsiao fu-jen chin-ch'ien tseng nien-shao* (The merchant's wife offers money to a young clerk), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 16, p. 223, l. 2; *Jen chin shu ku-erh hsün-mu, hsieh-tzu* (wedge), p. 1b, l. 4; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 102, p. 1578, l. 10; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 82, p. 935, l. 12.

3. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the lost work entitled *Yü-t'ang hsien-hua* (Idle chat from the Jade Hall), by Wang Jen-yü (880–942), as quoted in *Tai-p'ing kuang-chi* (Extensive gleanings from the reign of Great Tranquility), comp. Li Fang (925–96) et al., first printed in 981, 10 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1961), vol. 5, *chüan* 202, p. 1528, l. 1. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:722, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:387, l. 2; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 643, p. 5b, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 51, p. 846, l. 7; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 15, p. 32, l. 1; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 6b, l. 8; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan 2*, ch. 9, p. 3a, l. 12.

4. Kao-ching, or High Well, was the name of a location in Ming dynasty Peking. See *Wan-shu tsa-chi, chüan* 5, p. 37, l. 4.

5. The *chung-ching chin*, or "loyal and tranquil hat," here abbreviated to *ching-chin*, and also occurring in the form *chung-ching huan*, was an imposing type of headgear designed to be worn by officials above a certain rank while off duty. It was decorated with a variable number of ridges, which were indications of the rank of the wearer. Its description and the rules for its use were promulgated by imperial decree in 1528. Hsi-men Ch'ing was not entitled by his rank to wear this type of headgear. See *Ming shih*, vol. 6, *chüan* 67, p. 1639, ll. 6–13; and *Chung-kuo i-kuan fu-shih ta tz'u-tien*, p. 52.

6. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 8, p. 23, l. 12; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 3, p, 48, l. 7; and *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan 2*, p. 9a, l. 14.

7. This four-character expression occurs in a song suite by Teng Yü-pin (13th century), *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:308, l. 9; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 32, p. 505, I. 2; *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 3, ch. 13, p. 42b, l. 2; and *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 15a, l. 5.

8. This reduplicative expression occurs in a lyric by Lu Yu (1125–1210), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1594, lower register, l. 11.

9. The second and third, and fifth and sixth, lines above occur together, with minor textual variation, in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 32, p. 505, l. 2; and *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan* 3, ch. 13, p. 42b, ll. 2–3.

10. These two lines, with minor textual variation, occur together in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 30, p. 462, l. 6.

11. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 13, n. 10.

12. See ibid., chap. 3, n. 29.

13. Variants of this couplet occur in the early vernacular stories *I-k'u kuei lai tao-jen ch'u-kuai* (A mangy Taoist exorcises a lair of demons), in *Ching-shih t'ung-yen, chüan* 14, p. 190, l. 10; *Su-hsiang T'ing Chang Hao yü Ying-ying* (In Su-hsiang T'ing Chang Hao meets [Li] Ying-ying), in ibid., *chüan* 29, p. 450, l. 8; and Hsiao *fu-jen chin-ch'ien tseng nien-shao*, p. 224, l. 9; and in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 63, p. 3a, ll. 4–5.

14. This formulaic expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:993, l. 11; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:711, l. 17; *Jen chin shu ku-erh hsün-mu*, scene 2, p. 6b, l. 5; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 4, p. 60, l. 9.

15. Variants of this proverbial expression occur in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 54, p. 623, II. 13–14; and ch. 93, p. 1057, l. 15; *Shuang-lieh chi*, scene 12, p. 33, l. 1; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 47, p. 610, l. 3; and the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 87, p. 7a, l. 2; and ch. 91, p. 3b, l. 8.

16. The force of this *hsieh-hou yü* depends on puns between the words *feng* meaning "to meet" and *feng* meaning "to sew a seam," and the words *shang* meaning "to mount" and *shang* meaning "to stitch the vamp and the sole of a shoe together." A variant of this expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 61, p. 9b, l. 6.

17. This idiomatic expression recurs in ibid., vol. 2, ch. 39, p. 17a, l. 11.

18. A variant of this idiomatic expression, the Chinese equivalent of "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," is quoted as proverbial in the *Neng-kai chai man-lu* (Random notes from the studio of one capable of correcting his faults), by Wu Tseng (d. c. 1170), 2 vols. (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1979), vol. 2, *i-wen* (collected fragments), p. 553, l. 8, where it is said to have inspired a line in a poem by Huang T'ing-chien (1045–1105). On Hsi-shih, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 4, n. 2.

19. This formulaic four-character expression occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 48, p. 198, l. 7; *Chiao Hung chuan*, p. 292, l. 5; *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 5, p. 277, l. 11; *Feng-yüeh hsiang-ssu*, p. 91, l. 6; *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i, chüan* 3, p. 118, l. 13; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 95, p. 1076, l. 1; *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan 7*, ch. 64, p. 27a, l. 3; and *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 47, p. 190, l. 21.

20. On Chang Chün-jui and Ts'ui Ying-ying, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 13, n. 10.

21. An Lu-shan (d. 757) was an ethnically non-Chinese general who became a favorite of Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–56) of the T'ang dynasty but later led a rebellion against him in 755 that forced the emperor into exile and nearly toppled the dynasty. For his biography, see Howard S. Levy, *Biography of An Lu-shan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960). Tradition has it that he not only became the adopted son of Yang Kuei-fei (719–56), the emperor's favorite consort, but also had pseudo-incestuous sexual relations with her. See Levy, *Harem Favorites of an Illustrious Celestial*, pp. 116–18, and passim.

22. For Chang Chün-jui and Ts'ui Ying-ying, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 13, n. 10.

23. For the Weaving Maid and the Herd Boy, see ibid., chap. 2, n. 40.

24. For Juan Chao, see ibid., chap. 6, n. 28.

25. According to a story dating from the eleventh century or earlier, a young scholar named Ts'ui Huai-pao, on the Ch'ing-ming Festival in the year 754, fell in love with a psaltery player from the palace orchestra named Hsüeh Ch'iung-ch'iung when he chanced to see her on a spring outing. They eloped together, and were later apprehended but were pardoned by Emperor Hsüan-tsung, who gave Hsüeh Ch'iung-ch'iung to Ts'ui Huai-pao in marriage. See *Sung Yüan hsi-wen chi-i*, p. 136.

26. On Shuang Chien and Su Hsiao-ch'ing, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 15, n. 1.

27. The prolonged affair between the historical Empress Wu Tse-t'ien (r. 684–705) and the fictional character Hsüeh Ao-ts'ao is the principal focus of the *Ju-i chün chuan*. For a definitive study of the origins and significance of the name Hsüeh Ao-ts'ao, which appears to have been an invention of the author of the *Ju-i chün chuan*, see Stone, "The *Ruyijun zhuan* and the Origins of the Chinese Erotic Novel," pp. 294–312.

28. Shen I-chi (d. 177 B.C.) is a historical figure who rose to the rank of left counselor-in-chief as a favorite of Empress Lü (242–180 B.C.) of the Former Han dynasty, with whom he became intimate after the death of Emperor Kao-tsu (r. 202–195 B.C.) in 195 B.C. On Empress Lü, see Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 1, n. 21. On the nature of her relations with Shen I-chi, see *Shih-chi*, vol. 8, *chüan* 97, pp. 2702–2703; and *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1:282.

29. This is the name of a posture or stance employed in the martial arts and acrobatics as well as the arts of the bedchamber. See *Hsi-hu yu-lan chih-yü, chüan* 20, p. 358, l. 12; *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 57, p. 734, l. 2; ch. 79, p. 1017, ll. 5–6; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 69, l. 4. It also recurs in the Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua, vol. 4, ch. 65, p. 6b, l. 5; and ch. 68, p. 9b, l. 7.

30. This is also the name of a posture or stance employed in the martial arts and acrobatics as well as the arts of the bedchamber. See *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 32, p. 412, l. 5; vol. 2, ch. 52, p. 677, l. 2; ch. 73, p. 937, l. 1; ch. 79, p. 1017, ll. 6–7; and ch. 81, p. 1041, l. 5. In ibid., ch. 79, p. 1017, l. 6, it is mentioned in conjunction with the posture referred to in the preceding note.

31. This is also the name of a position for sexual intercourse that has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 27, p. 10b, ll. 4–5.

32. There is an anonymous prosimetric work entitled *Feng-liu lo-ch'ü* (The pleasures of romance) that is a mock-heroic description of sexual combat, the protagonists of which are named the Raven Black General and the Matron of the Hairy Cave. See *Kuo-se t'ien-hsiang*, vol. 3, *chüan* 10, upper register, pp. 28a-32a.

33. Variants of this line occur in *Ts'an-t'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 37, p. 149, l. 5; and *Feng-liu lo-ch'ü* p. 32a, ll. 2–3.

34. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:636, ll. 14–15.

35. Variants of this line occur in *Ts'an-T'ang Wu-tai shih yen-i chuan*, ch. 37 p. 149, II. 4–5; and *Feng-liu lo-ch'ü*, p. 32a, l. 2.

36. A variant of this couplet recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 78, p. 10b, l. 9.

37. The point of the second of these two *hsieh-hou yü* turns on a pun between the expressions *hsien-jen* meaning "idol of salt" and *hsien-jen* meaning "idle person." I have tried to convey this by punning "idol" and "idle."

CHAPTER 38

1. The first and last couplets of this poem are derived, with some textual variation, from the first and last couplets of a poem in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 65, p. 1110, ll. 6–7. The second couplet is quite similar to one that has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 14, p. la, l. 4.

2. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 80, p. 8b, l. 4.

3. This line occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:785, l. 10; and *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:196, l. 18.

4. This is the name of a famous variety of medicinal wine that, during the late Ming period, was a specialty of the Imperial Wine Office, a eunuch agency under the direction of the Palace Treasury that was responsible for providing fine foods and wines for imperial

consumption. See *Ming kung shih* (A historical account of the Ming palaces), by Liu Jo-yü (b. 1541) (Peking: Pei-ching ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), ch. 2, p. 47, l. 15. The author of this work was a palace eunuch during the Wan-li reign period (1573–1620).

5. For the last two clauses of this sentence, see *Ju-i chün chuan*, p. 13b, l. 8; and p. 13a, ll. 3–4.

6. See ibid., p. 13a, l. 7.

7. See ibid., p. 11a, l. 10.

8. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Hsün-fang ya-chi*, vol. 2, *chüan* 4, p. 34a, l. 13.

9. I.e., the "titillating bell." See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:324, ll. 28–29.

10. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:887, l. 3; *Chien-t'ieh ho-shang*, p. 18, l. 1; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 174, l. 10.

11. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 86, p. 10a, ll. 3–4.

12. Hsi-hsia was the name of an ethnically non-Chinese regime in the Northwest that existed from 1032 to 1227.

13. There are contemporary recipes for making chrysanthemum wine in *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*, vol. 4, *chüan* 25, p. 30, l. 13; and *Tsun-sheng pa-chien*, p. 730.

14. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 43, l. 9; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 33, p. 110, l. 4; *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 6, p. 17a, l. 7; *T'ang-shu chih-chuan t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 5, p. 5b, l. 10; *Pei Sung chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 5a, l. 11; *Lieh-kuo chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 5, p. 76a, l. 9; *Huan-sha chi*, scene 16, p. 55, l. 2; *Ming-feng chi*, scene 7, p. 27, l. 8; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 241, l. 3; and *Pai-chia kung-an, chüan* 1, p. 8a, l. 13.

15. The ultimate source of this four-character expression is probably the famous narrative poem by Po Chü-i (772–846) entitled *Ch'ang-hen ko* (The Song of Everlasting Sorrow), where it is used to describe the loneliness of Emperor Hsüan-tsung (r. 712–56) of the T'ang dynasty after the death of his favorite, Yang Kuei-fei (719–56). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 435, p. 4819, l. 8. It also occurs in *Huai-ch'un ya-chi, chüan* 10, p. 9b, l. 16.

16. This four-character expression occurs in *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 5, p. 38, l. 14; *Hsün-fang ya-chi*, p. 45b, l. 10; and *Ming-feng chi*, scene 22, p. 95, l. 2.

17. This couplet from a poem by Wang Ya (cs 792, d. 835) has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 8, pp. 5a, l. 11–5b, l. 1. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:155, ll. 27–30; and chap. 8, n. 16.

18. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 10a, l. 5.

19. The expression that I have translated as "cursed" is a play on words consisting of the two characters *ssu* (four) and *ma* (horse), which can be combined to form the character *ma* (to curse). The same play on words recurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 80, p. 3b, 1.7.

20. This idiomatic expression, or variants thereof, occurs ubiquitously in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:708, l. 11; and 4:1366, l. 7; a song suite by Wang Chia-fu (c. 1225–c. 1302), in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:91, l. 13; an anonymous song suite in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 4a, l. 12; the anonymous Ming ch'uan-ch'i drama entitled *Ku-ch'eng chi* (The reunion at Ku-ch'eng), in *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an, ch'u-chi*, item 25, *chüan* 1, scene 9, p. 9a, ll. 7–8; *Pao-chien chi*, scene 15, p. 31,

l. 16; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 70, p. 902, l. 12. Versions of this anonymous song are included in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:34, ll. 5–8; *Chiu-pien nan chiu-kung p'u*, p. 216, ll. 9–12; *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 15b, p. 21b, l. 8-p. 22a, l. 1; *Nan-tz'u yün-hsüan, chüan* 11, p. 73, ll. 10–12; and *Tseng-ting nan chiu-kung ch'ü-p'u* (An augmented and corrected edition of the formulary for songs composed in the nine southern musical modes), comp. Shen Ching (1553–1610), originally published in 1606, fac. repr. of late Ming edition, in *Shan-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an*, vol. 28, *chüan* 20, p. 18a, ll. 3–7. Although there are significant variants, the version of this song in the novel is closest to that in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*.

21. See chap. 31, n. 20.

22. See chap. 37, n. 5.

23. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 99, p. 2a, l. 4.

24. Variants of this proverbial couplet occur as early as the eleventh century in a speech attributed to Ch'an Master Ch'i. See *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 3, *chüan* 16, p. 1048, ll. 3–4. It is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 20, p. 104, l. 7; and scene 27, p. 137, l. 4; *Hsiao Sun-t'u*, scene 9, p. 287, l. 12; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1295, ll. 15–16; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:198, ll. 8–9; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 17, p. 59, l. 10; *Su Wu mu-yang chi, chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 20a, l. 4; *Ch'ien-chin chi*, scene 12, p. 33, l. 4; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 10, p. 156, ll. 4–5. The two halves of this couplet also appear independently. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:318, l. 9; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:191, l. 5; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 43, p. 695, l. 16; *San-Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan 2*, ch. 6, p. 5b, l. 4; and the *Chin P'ing Mei t'zu-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 92, p. 13b, ll. 7–8.

25. Variants of this idiomatic couplet occur in an anonymous song suite in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 5, p. 22b, l. 4; and in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 61, p. 9b, l. 3.

26. A variant of this idiomatic couplet occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 62, p. 1045, l. 16.

27. This formulaic four-character expression is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1660, l. 18; *Chiao Hung chuan*, p. 298, l. 13; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 19, p. 60, l. 2; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 28, p. 88, l. 1; *Chung-ch'ing li-chi, chüan* 6, p. 38b, l. 9; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan 2*, scene 35, p. 411, l. 25; and a collection of riddles by Li K'ai-hsien (1502–68), the author's preface to which is dated 1555, in *Li K'ai-hsien chi*, 3:1020, l. 16. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 56, p. 11a, l. 1.

28. Variants of this idiomatic couplet, sometimes with the two lines in reversed order, occur in a fragment of the lost early hsi-wen drama *Wang K'uei fu Kuei-ying* (Wang K'uei betrays Kuei-ying), in *Sung-Yüan hsi-wen chi-i*, p. 38, l. 20; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:849, l. 8; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 36, p. 202, l. 11; *Chin-yin chi, chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 15b, l. 9; and *Tuan-fa chi, chüan 2*, scene 32, p. 30b, l. 2.

29. Variants of this idiomatic expression occur in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Shou-ch'u (910–90), in *Ku tsun-su yü-lu, chüan* 38, p. 326a, lower register, l. 15; a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Hsüan-liang (10th century), in *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 8, p. 508, l. 5; a lyric composed jointly by Chu Hsi (1130–1200) and Chang Shih (1133–1180), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 3:1676, upper register, ll. 1–2; *Chang Hsieh chuang-yüan*, scene 20, p. 106, l. 1; *Pao Lung-t'u tuan Ts'ao Kuo-chiu kung-an chuan* (The story of how Academician Pao judged the case of Imperial Brother-in-law Ts'ao), originally published in the 1470s, fac. repr. in *Ming Ch'eng-hua shuo-ch'ang tz'u-hua ts'ung-k'an, ts'e* 6,

p. 23a, l. 4; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 27, p. 311, l. 16; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 80, p. 1030, l. 9.

30. This anonymous song is included in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:34, l. 10–35, l. 2; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 15b, p. 22a, ll. 6–9. Although there are significant variants, the version of this song in the novel is closer to that in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*.

31. This couplet is derived from a poem by Po Chü-i (772–846), the title of which states explicitly that it employs the relationship between husband and wife as an allegory on the relationship between ruler and minister. See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 7, *chüan* 426, p. 4694, l. 7. It has already occurred in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 10a, ll. 10–11. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, 1:239, ll. 16–19; and chap. 12, n. 33.

32. A variant of this line is described as proverbial in *Hsi-hsiang chi*. See *[Chi-p'ing chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 3, scene 4, p. 132, l. 9. See also *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 1, p. 2b, l. 10; *Yü-huan chi*, scene 11, p. 36, ll. 5–6; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 21, p. 66, l. 11; *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 13, p. 36, l. 9; and *Tzu-ch'ai chi*, scene 42, p. 158, l. 9. The same line recurs in a variant form in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 55, p. 9a, l. 3.

33. The expression "Ch'u peak" refers to the famous Witches' Mountain, located near the Yangtze Gorges in the ancient state of Ch'u. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 47.

34. "Blue Bridge" is a toponym that has come to stand for a lovers' trysting place because of the role it plays in a famous literary tale entitled *P'ei Hang*, by P'ei Hsing (825–80). See *P'ei Hsing Ch'uan-ch'i* (P'ei Hsing's Tales of the marvelous), ed. and annot. Chou Leng-ch'ieh (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), pp. 54–57; and "Pei Hang," in *Ladies of the T'ang*, trans. Elizabeth Te-chen Wang (Taipei: Heritage Press, 1961), pp. 53–67. In this line of the song the allusion to "Blue Bridge" is combined with a legend, at least as old as the third century B.C., in which a certain Wei-sheng once made a tryst with his lover under the pilings of a bridge. When the water rose and his lover did not appear, he chose to clasp his arms around the pilings and drown rather than to desert his post. The locus classicus for this story appears to be the *Chuang-tzu*. See *Chuang-tzu yin-te*, ch. 29, p. 82, ll. 43–44; and Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, ch. 29, p. 329, l. 19-p. 330, l. 1. This four-character expression occurs immediately after a variant of the preceding line in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1365, l. 21; and also occurs independently in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:792, l. 21.

35. Variants of this couplet occur in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan 2*, p. 2a, l. 5; and in an excerpt from a lost ch'uan-ch'i dramatic version of *Chung-ch'ing li-chi* by Chao Yü-li (fl. late 16th century), entitled *Huang-ying chi* (The oriole), included in the anthology *Ta ming-ch'un* (Great bright spring), comp. Ch'eng Wan-li (Chien-yang: Chin K'uei, n.d.), fac. repr. of Wan-li (1573–1620) ed., in *Shan-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an*, 6:103, upper register, l. 1.

36. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:183, l. 6.

37. The Radiant Terrace is another name for the site of the tryst between King Huai of Ch'u (r. 328–299 B.C.) and the Goddess of Witch's Mountain. Thus, references to this famous site are literary euphemisms for sexual intercourse. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 47; and chap. 29, n. 146. This line occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:484, l. 5; and *Pao-chien chi*, scene 45, p. 80, ll. 17–18.

38. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:706, l. 16; a song suite by Wang Chia-fu (c. 1225-c. 1302), in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 1:91, l. 7; a song suite by T'ang Shih (fl. late 14th-early 15th centuries), in ibid., 2:1489, l. 10; *Feng-yüeh*

Nan-lao chi, scene 1, p. 2b, l. 11; an anonymous song suite in *[Hsin-pien] Nan chiu-kung tz'u, chüan* 3, p. 4a, l. 7; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 3, p. 166, l. 5.

39. This anonymous song is included in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1.35, ll. 3–5; and *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu, ts'e* 15b, p.22a, ll. 2–5. Although there are significant variants, the version of this song in the novel is closer to that in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*.

40. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 46, p. 5a, l. 4.

41. A version of this poem, with some textual variation, occurs in *Hsiu-ju chi*, scene 24, p. 69, ll. 4–5. It also recurs, with a few insignificant variants, in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 99, p. 2b, ll. 2–3. The final couplet is derived from a poem by Ch'en Yü (1184–1275). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 57:35805, l. 2; and 35814, l. 15. Variants of this couplet are ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:58, l. 17; *Su Wu mu-yang chi, chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 19b, ll. 2–3; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 10, p. 28, l. 12; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan* 1, scene 6, p. 339, ll. 1–2; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 17, p. 48, l. 10; *Tuan-fa chi, chüan* 1, scene 9, p. 20a, l. 7; *Huan-sha chi*, scene 39, p. 139, ll. 11–12; *Ssu-hsi chi*, scene 21, p. 57, ll. 5–6; *Ssu-sheng yüan*, p. 25, l. 4; *Su Ying huang-hou ying-wu chi, chüan* 1, scene 10, p. 20a, l. 5; and *Shuang-lieh chi*, scene 8, p. 23, l. 7. A variant of the last line occurs independently in *Liu sheng mi Lien chi, chüan 2*, p. 3a, ll. 12–13.

42. This idiomatic four-character expression occurs in *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 1, p. 3a, l. 5; and *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, p. 7a, l. 4.

43. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 52, p. 10b, l. 1.

44. This anonymous song is included in *Tz'u-lin chai-yen*, 1:35, ll. 6–8; but not in *Yung-hsi yüeh-fu*. It is also omitted from the B and C editions of the *Chin P'ing Mei*.

45. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 39, p. 13b, l. 9.

46. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Yen Shu (991–1055), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:96, upper register, l. 9; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 33, p. 105, l. 3; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan 2*, scene 34, p. 407, l. 21; and *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 21, p. 64, l. 3.

47. This couplet is derived from a poem attributed to Ts'ui Ying-ying in *Ying-ying chuan*, p. 135, ll. 8–9. The last line occurs independently in *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 10, p. 26, l. 8.

48. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 47.

CHAPTER 39

1. Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty (r. 141–87 B.C.) was obsessed by the realm of the supernatural and actively engaged in the search for transcendence. He is said to have erected brazen colossi on the grounds of his palace who held up pans to catch the dew, which was said to be a necessary ingredient of the elixir of immortality. Legend has it that he was visited by the Queen Mother of the West, who bestowed on him the peaches of immortality. For a fascinating study of this encounter, see Suzanne E. Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), chap. 4, and passim.

2. Those who achieve transcendence are said to be able to mount into the sky on the back of a phoenix.

3. This poem is by the ninth-century poet Hsüeh Feng (cs 841). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 8, *chüan* 548, p. 6324, ll. 15–16.

4. This idiomatic expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tzu-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 11a, 1.2.

5. These two four-character expressions recur together in ibid., ch. 80, p. 9a, l. 7.

6. Variants of this idiomatic expression occur in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 21, p. 306, l. 15; and p. 310, ll. 15–16. It also recurs in the same form in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 98, p. 10b, l. 2.

7. This four-character expression occurs in *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan 2*, p. 115a, l. 2; a quatrain by Yü Ch'ien (1398–1457), in *Yü Ch'ien shih hsüan* (A selection of Yü Ch'ien's poetry), ed. and annot. Lin Han (Hang-chou: Che-chiang jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1982), p. 15, l. 13; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 57, p. 9a, l. 2.

8. This onomatopoeic reduplicative expression occurs in a poem by Tu Fu (712–70), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 234, p. 2583, l. 10; *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 8, p. 156, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:936, l. 7; *Chung-ch'ing li-chi, chüan 7*, p. 19b, l. 12; *Ming-chu chi*, scene 25, p. 78, l. 6; *Nan Hsi-hsiang chi* (Lu Ts'ai), *chüan 2*, scene 24, p. 383, l. 13; and *Huan-sha chi*, scene 9, p. 27, l. 3.

9. The *Yü-hsia chi* (Register of the jade casket) is the short title of a composite work on hemerology, probably compiled in its present form in the mid-fifteenth century, which is included in *ts'e* 1108 in the *Hsü Tao-tsang* (Supplement to the Taoist canon), reprinted as part of the *Cheng-t'ung Tao-tsang* (The Cheng-t'ung [1436–49] Taoist canon) (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu kuan, 1926). The first part of this work consists of a calendar of the birthdays of the gods of Chinese popular religion, and the ninth day of the first month is designated as the birthday of the Jade Emperor on p. 1b, l. 5.

10. The *Yü-hsia chi* states that ceremonies performed between the eighth and the fifteenth days of the first month are ten million times more efficacious than those performed on ordinary days. See ibid., p. 1b, ll. 8–9.

11. The text here actually reads "the seventh month," but I have emended it in order to bring it into conformity with the time scheme of the novel.

12. The Three Treasures, more commonly referred to as the Three Pure Ones, are the three principal deities of the Taoist religion, the Heavenly Worthy of the Primordial Beginning, the Heavenly Worthy of the Numinous Treasure, and the Heavenly Worthy of the Way and Its Power, that preside over the realms of Heaven, Earth, and Man, respectively. See John Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 38, and passim.

13. This couplet occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 53, p. 882, l. 8.

14. This four-character phrase occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:600, l. 1; *Lo-yang san-kuai chi*, p. 72, l. 5; *Hsi-hu san-t'a chi*, p. 26, l. 15; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 42, p. 678, l. 3; and *San Sui p'ing-yao chuan, chüan 2*, ch. 7, p. 13b, l. 8.

15. This four-character phrase occurs in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 42, p. 678, l. 3.

16. A close variant of this line occurs in ibid., vol. 4, ch. 120, p. 1818, l. 3.

17. These two lines occur together in ibid., l. 4.

18. A close variant of this line occurs in ibid.

19. The Yü-lo Terrace is located in the Grand Veil Heaven, the highest of the Taoist heavens, and is the site of the pulpit that the Heavenly Worthy of the Primordial Beginning ascends in order to preach the Way. See *Chung-hua tao-chiao ta tz'u-tien* (Encyclopedia of

the Chinese Taoist religion), comp. Hu Fu-ch'en et al. (Peking: Chung-kuo she-hui k'o-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1995), p. 491.

20. The thirty-two heavens and the names of their presiding deities are defined variously in different Taoist sources. See ibid., p. 1452; and Stephen R. Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 382–83.

21. The Jade Capitoline is the name of a mountain in the Grand Veil Heaven that is the residence of the highest deities in the Taoist pantheon. See ibid., p. 383.

22. This is a feature borrowed from Buddhist iconography, according to which one of the thirty-two defining characteristics of a buddha is the possession of a curl of white hairs between the eyebrows that emits rays of light.

23. On the vexed subject of the Three Heavens, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 188–94.

24. Li-lou and Shih-k'uang are demigods of early Chinese legend, renowned for the acuity of their vision and hearing, respectively. About Li-lou little is known, but there is considerable lore about Shih-k'uang, a legendary music master of the sixth century B.C., which is conveniently collected in *Shih-k'uang: ku hsiao-shuo chi-i* (Shih-k'uang: assembled fragments of an ancient story), ed. and annot. Lu Wen-hui (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1985). In *Wu-wang fa Chou p'ing-hua* they are identified with the figures Thousand Li Eyes and Wind-borne Ears that are often depicted in Chinese iconography. See ibid., pp. 70–71; and the translation of this passage in Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*, pp. 63–64. This pair of figures is described as standing in attendance at the gate of the palace of the Jade Emperor in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 3, l. 1.

25. On the White Tiger and the Green Dragon, see chap. 26, n. 62. Although there is considerable textual variation, the language of this set piece of descriptive parallel prose, up to this point, is sufficiently close to indicate that its proximate source is almost certainly a similar passage in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, where, ironically, the temple described is one dedicated not to the Jade Emperor, but to Sung Chiang and his colleagues, the most notorious outlaws of the early twelfth century. See ibid., vol. 4, ch. 120, p. 1818, ll. 3–6.

26. The "indestructible golden body" is a Buddhist term for the dharmakāya, or dharma body, of a buddha, applied here to a Taoist deity.

27. On the folk belief that the Jade Emperor is surnamed Chang, see *Chung-kuo min-chien chu-shen* (The gods of Chinese folklore), comp. Tsung Li and Liu Ch'ün (Shih-chia chuang: Ho-pei jen-min ch'u-pan she, 1987), pp. 27–38.

28. This elaborate type of headgear was shaped like a mortarboard with twelve tassels suspended from both the front and rear edges. It was a symbol of rank and could only be worn by emperors. For a detailed illustration, see Chou Hsi-pao, *Chung-kuo ku-tai fu-shih shih*, p. 34.

29. On Indigo Field jade, see chap. 36, n. 22.

30. The eight trigrams are the eight arrangements of three broken or unbroken lines from which are generated the sixty-four hexagrams of *The Book of Changes*. The nine palaces are the eight positions represented by the eight trigrams when arranged in a circular formation, plus the center. These terms, and the multidimensional concepts for which they stand, play a significant role in the symbolism of the Taoist altar. See Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, chap. 3, "Liturgy in Space: The Taoist Altar."

31. The three refuges and five precepts are originally Buddhist terms, referring to the stipulation that disciples of that faith should acknowledge allegiance to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, and abstain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and alcohol.

32. A chiliocosm is a thousand-millionfold Buddha-world, consisting of an incalculable number of lesser worlds.

33. This four-character expression occurs in a commemorative inscription by T'ao Hung-ching (456–536), as quoted in the *I-wen lei-chü* (A categorized chrestomathy of literary excerpts), comp. Ou-yang Hsün (557–641), 2 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1965), vol. 2, *chüan* 78, p. 1342, l. 11; a lyric attributed to Lü Tung-pin (9th century), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 12, *chüan* 900, p. 10170, l. 9; a speech by the Buddhist monk Wen-i (885–958), *Ching-te ch'uan-teng lu* (The transmission of the lamp compiled in the Ching-te reign period [1004–1007]), comp. Tao-yüan (fl. early 11th century), in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, vol. 51, no. 2076, *chüan* 24, p. 399, lower register, l. 24; a poem by Chang Po-tuan (11th century), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 10:6466, l. 6; a lyric by Shih Hao (1106–94), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:1276, lower register, l. 6; and *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan* 1, p. 23b, l. 10.

34. This line is from a quatrain by Hsü Hun (cs 832). See *Pen-shih shih, chüan 2*, p. 15, ll. 7–8; and *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 8, *chüan* 538, p. 6142, l. 13. It also occurs in a lyric by the 30th Taoist Celestial Master Chang Chi-hsien (1092–1126), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:763, upper register, ll. 2–3. The proximate source is probably *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 53, p. 882, l. 10.

35. The Purple Elysium is the dwelling place of the Taoist gods.

36. The proximate source of this couplet is *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 2, ch. 53, p. 882, ll. 10–11.

37. The term *Ling-pao*, or Numinous Treasure, is the name of an important school of Taoism that became established in the fifth century and is significant for manifesting the first true infiltration of Buddhism into Taoism, and for determining the essential forms of Taoist ritual that continue to be practiced to the present day. For a succinct description of this school, see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, trans. Phyllis Brooks (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), chap. 6.

38. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 62, p. 711, l. 11.

39. *Jade Pivot* is the short title of a text in the Taoist canon, probably dating from the twelfth century, the full title of which is *Chiu-t'ien Ying-yüan Lei-sheng P'u-hua Tien-tsun Yü-shu pao-ching* (Jade pivot precious scripture enunciated by the Celestial Worthy of the Thunderclap of Universal Salvation That Resonates with the Primal Essence of the Nine Heavens). See *Cheng-t'ung tao-tsang, ts'e* 25.

40. The term "anterior heaven" refers to the theoretical realm that coexists with the phenomenal realm, or "posterior heaven," though it is logically distinguishable from it. For a nuanced discussion of the meaning of this term, see Anne D. Birdwhistell, *Transition to Neo-Confucianism: Shao Yung on Knowledge and Symbols of Reality* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 66–89.

41. This four-character expression occurs in *Shen-i fu*, p. 43b, l. 4.

42. This four-character expression occurs in *Nü lun-yü*, p. 6b, l. 7.

43. This four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 89, p. 1151, l. 15; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 93, p. 7a, l. 3.

44. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a poem attributed to the Buddhist poet Shih-te (8th century), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 12, *chüan* 807, p. 9109, l. 6; *Feng-yüeh Nan-lao chi*, scene 1, p. 1b, l. 6; *Shen-hsiang ch'üan-pien, chüan* 631, p. 49a, l. 9; and *Mi-teng yin-hua, chüan* 1, p. 325, l. 8.

45. For a picture of this type of Taoist headgear, see *Chung-kuo i-kuan fu-shih ta tz'u-tien*, p. 105.

46. This four-character expression occurs in *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, ch. 57, p. 735, l. 11.

47. The four-character expression that I have translated as "ascends in broad daylight" describes one of the manifestations of Taoist transcendence. It occurs in an anonymous song in *Ch'üan Yüan san-ch'ü*, 2:1700, l. 5; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:961, l. 6; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 55, p. 631, l. 6; and *Yang chia fu shih-tai chung-yung yen-i chih-chuan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 3, p. 42b, l. 6.

48. This couplet refers to two episodes in the hagiography of Lü Tung-pin (9th century), the shadowy figure who is the most popular of the Eight Taoist Immortals. The first line refers to an ancient anecdote about an anonymous figure who paints a picture of a crane on the wall of a tavern in lieu of paying his bill and subsequently summons the crane from the wall, mounts it, and flies into the sky. This is one of a number of different stories about the origin of the Yellow Crane Tower, a famous landmark near the modern city of Wu-ch'ang in Hupei province. For a summary of this anecdote and a translation of a well-known poem by Ts'ui Hao (cs 723, d. 754) that alludes to it, see Owen, *The Great Age of Chinese Poetry*, p. 62. The belief that Lü Tung-pin had ascended to heaven in broad daylight from the Yellow Crane Tower is attested as early as the thirteenth century in a hagiographic account of his career in a work included in the Taoist canon. See *Chin-lien cheng-tsung chi* (An account of the true lineage of the golden lotus), comp. Ch'in Chih-an (1188–1244), preface dated 1241, in *Cheng-t'ung tao-tsang, ts'e* 75–76, *chüan* 1, p. 8a, ll. 3–5. These two legends had become conflated by the sixteenth century, as evidenced by a passage in *Tung-yu chi: shang-tung pa-hsien chuan*, 1:118–20. The second line in the couplet refers to the legend that Lü Tung-pin paid three visits to the city of Yüeh-yang on the shores of Lake Tung-t'ing, which required him to pass over the lake three times. This story is probably inspired by a poem attributed to Lü Tung-pin in twelfth-century sources. See *Sung-shih chi-shih*, vol. 13, *chüan* 90, p. 2160, l. 10; and *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 12, *chüan* 858, p. 9696, l. 6. It also served as the inspiration for the famous tsa-chü drama entitled *Lü Tung-pin san-tsui Yüeh-yang Lou* (Lü Tung-pin becomes drunk three times in Yüeh-yang Tower), by Ma Chih-yüan (c. 1250-c. 1325). See *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:614–31.

49. The four-character expression that I have translated as "two sleeves swelled by a clear breeze" occurs in a lyric by Hsieh I (d. 1113), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:648, lower register, ll. 1–2; a lyric by the Taoist master Feng Tsun-shih (14th century), *Ch'üan Chin Yüan tz'u*, 2:1241, upper register, 1.12; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:129, l. 19; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 1, p. 36, l. 4.

50. This couplet, with two insignificant variants, recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 84, p. 3b, l. 10.

51. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 17, p. 192, l. 16.

52. This title is an abbreviated reference to the *Kao-shang Yü-huang pen-hsing chi ching* (Scripture on the deeds of the most exalted Jade Emperor), probably dating from the 12th century, in *Cheng-t'ung tao-tsang, ts'e* 23.

53. The second and third of the four characters in this line have been mistakenly transposed. Grand Monad, Director of Destiny, and T'ao K'ang (literally Peach Vigor) are the names of three Taoist deities that are resident in the human body. For a discussion of them and a translation of a fifth-century Taoist text in which their names occur together, see Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures*, pp. 384–85; and p. 423, ll. 14–15.

54. For a description of this Taoist vestment, an analysis of its symbolism, and back and front photographs of such a garment as used in contemporary practice, see Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, pp. 291, 312, and 314.

55. The Three Powers refer to Heaven, Earth, and Man.

56. This date, which corresponds to the year 1121 in the Western calendar, does not conform to the time scheme of the novel, which would place this event in the year 1117. To correct this discrepancy, the text should read the seventh year of the Cheng-ho reign period.

57. On the "Bell of Fluid Gold and Fire," see Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity*, trans. Julian F. Pas and Norman J. Girardot (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 32–33.

58. These four marshals are mentioned together in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 4:1695, l. 10; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 16, p. 184, l. 5; and *San-pao t'ai-chien Hsi-yang chi t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, ch. 13, p. 164, l. 13.

59. These four celestial lords are mentioned together in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch.71, p. 1194, l. 4.

60. On this apotropaic deity, see Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, pp. 73–75.

61. For a description of the curtain-raising ritual in modern Taoist practice, see ibid., p. 55.

62. On the ritual of sounding the metal bell and striking the jade chime, see ibid.; and Kristofer M. Schipper, *Le Fen-teng: rituel taoiste* (Paris: École Française D'Extreme-Orient, 1975), pp. 6–8. For the titles of the generals, see ibid., p. 32, l. 1; and p. 33, l. 9.

63. For the relationship among these directions, numbers, and colors, see the diagram reproduced in Judith M. Boltz, A *Survey of Taoist Literature: Tenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1987), p. 28.

64. These nine thunder deities are listed together in a scripture, probably dating from the twelfth century, entitled *Wu-shang chiu-hsiao yü-ch'ing ta-fan tzu-wei hsüan-tu lei-t'ing yü-ching* (The jade scripture of the thunderclap emitted by the incomparable great Brahma of the nine empyreans of jade clarity in the mystic capital of purple tenuity), in *Cheng-t'ung tao-tsang, ts'e* 25, pp. 11a, l. 7–1 1b, l. 1. The fifth deity has been inadvertently omitted from the text of the novel. I have supplied it from the above source.

65. The Princess of Yellow Purity is a Taoist deity that resides in the human body, of which she presides over the middle part. See Maspero, *Taoism and Chinese Religion*, p. 353, n. 95; and Robinet, *Taoist Meditation*, pp. 101–102, and 131–32.

66. On the Red-robed Guardian, who represents the Taoist priest as a civil official, see Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, pp. 45, 132, and the illustration on p. 298.

67. For a definitive study of this subject, see Hou Ching-lang, *Monnaies d'offrande et la notion de tresorerie dans la religion chinoise* (Paris: College de France, Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1975).

68. For an illustrated study of this subject, see Clarence Burton Day, *Chinese Peasant Cults: Being a Study of Chinese Paper Gods* (Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Company, 1969).

69. The term for this altar table in Chinese is *tung-an*, literally "cave table." For an analysis of why it is so designated, see Lagerwey, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, p. 39.

70. On "flying duck shoes," see chap. 26, n. 24.

71. The Four August Ones refers either to a quadrumvirate of deities ranking immediately below the Three Pure Ones in the Taoist pantheon, or to the gods of the four cardinal directions.

72. On Mount Lo-feng, the site, according to some texts, of the courts of the underworld, see Bokenkamp, *Early Taoist Scriptures*, p. 235.

73. The last twenty-six lines of this set piece of descriptive parallel prose, beginning with the phrase "As an auspicious nimbus of incense arises," are derived, with little textual variation, from a passage in *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, chap. 71, p. 1194, ll. 8–11.

74. No work of this title is extant, but the story of the narrow escape of Liu Pang (256–195 B.C.), the founder of the Han dynasty, from a plot by Hsiang Yü (232–202 B.C.) to assassinate him at a banquet at Hung-men in 206 B.C. is justly famous. See *Shih-chi*, vol. 1, *chüan 7*, pp. 310–15; and Watson, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, 1:49–55. This episode is narrated in the *Hsi-Han chih-chuan* (Chronicle of the Western Han dynasty), which was probably based on an earlier p'ing-hua such as the one named in the novel. See *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 1, pp. 22b-25a.

75. This was probably a type of display table that could be dismantled and reassembled in order to facilitate transportation. For an illustrated description of a Ming dynasty example of such a piece, see Grace Wu Bruce, *Dreams of Chu Tan Chamber and the Romance with Huanghuali* Wood: *The Dr. S. Y. Yip Collection of Classic Chinese Furniture* (Hong Kong: New Island Printing Company, 1991), pp. 76–79.

76. For a description of the role played by the Goddess of Sons and Grandsons in Peking earlier this century, see Lowe, *The Adventures of Wu*, 1:6, and 44–45.

77. This four-character expression is from chapter 9 of the *Tao-te ching* (Book of the Way and its power). See *Lao Tzu Tao Te Ching*, trans. D. C. Lau (New York: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 65; where, ironically, the next line reads, "But there is none who can keep them."

78. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:161, l. 20; and 3:947, l. 19.

79. This type of high-grade paper was extremely expensive and was used for ceremonial purposes during the sacrifices at the ancestral temple of the imperial family during the Wan-li reign period (1573–1620). See *Wan-shu tsa-chi, chüan* 14, p. 126, l. 16; and p. 128, ll. 9–10. For a description of how this paper was manufactured, see Sun and Sun, *T'ien-kung k'ai-wu*, p. 230.

80. The name Wu Ying-yüan can be interpreted ironically as a pun on the words *wu yin-yüan* (lacking karmic affinity), or *wu ying-yüan* (lacking resonance with the primal essence), the term *ying-yüan* being part of the name of the thunder god who enunciates the *Jade Pivot* scripture. See note 39 above. This implication is suggested by P'an Chin-lien's misreading of the name as "Wu something or other yüan," which puns with *wu shen-mo yüan* (lacking any affinity whatever).

81. Variants of this expression recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 72, p. 18a, l. 5; and ch. 75, p. 18a, l. 9.

82. Liu Chan (391–440) is a historical figure who served as grand councilor during the Liu-Sung dynasty (420–79). For his biography, see *Sung shu* (History of the Liu-Sung dynasty), comp. Shen Yüeh (441–513), 8 vols. (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1974), vol. 6, *chüan* 69, pp. 1815–19. He is alleged to have subjected each of his daughters to infanticide as soon as she was born, which elicited the criticism of his contemporaries. See ibid., p. 1819, l. 5. Presumably his justification for doing so was the sexist belief that daughters would not amount to anything.

83. This *hsieh-hou yü* about Liu Chan's daughters recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 11a, l. 3.

84. This four-character expression occurs in *Liu sheng mi Lien chi, chüan 2*, p. 37a, l. 3.

85. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:231, 1.4; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 69, p. 11a, l. 5.

86. Cheng En is a legendary figure, apparently without a basis in historical fact, who is alleged to have been a sworn brother and sidekick of Chao K'uang-yin (927–76), the founding emperor of the Sung dynasty (r. 960–76), during his early adventures. He is notorious for his ugliness and impetuosity and figures in many works of drama and fiction about the founding of the Sung dynasty.

87. Although the name is not used here, the story that follows is in the form of the popular religious narratives called *pao-chüan* (precious scrolls or precious volumes), combining prose narrative, religious and secular verse forms, and songs to preexisting melodies. For an important recent book on this subject and its significance, see Daniel L. Overmyer, *Precious Volumes: An Introduction to Chinese Sectarian Scriptures from the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). For a critical assessment of the meaning of the *pao-chüan* included in the *Chin P'ing Mei*, and of the following story in particular, see Carlitz, *The Rhetoric of Chin p'ing mei* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 59–66. The version of this *pao-chüan* quoted and summarized below is the earliest known, although there are a number of more elaborate Ch'ing dynasty recensions extant that tell virtually the same story at greater length. See, e.g., *Wu-tsu Huang-mei pao-chüan* (The precious volume on the Fifth Patriarch of Huang-mei)(N.p.: Princeton University Library, n.d.).

88. According to the 1291 edition of the *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching* (The Dharma treasure of the platform sutra of the Sixth Patriarch), ed. Tsung-pao (13th century), in *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*, vol. 48, no. 2008, p. 361, lower register, ll. 17–18, the Thirty-second Patriarch was Hung-jen (602–75), also identified as the Fifth Patriarch in the Chinese succession of Ch'an Buddhism. For the embryo out of which the following story developed, see *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, p. 51, ll. 8–13.

89. The four-character expression that I have translated "transmit the mind-seal of the Buddha" occurs twice in the *Liu-tsu ta-shih fa-pao t'an-ching*, p. 359, upper register ll. 18–19, and lower register, ll. 15–16.

90. This date corresponds to the year 672 in the Western calendar.

91. Emperor Kao-tsung of the T'ang dynasty reigned from 649 to 683.

92. This formulaic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tzu-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 74, p. 12a, l. 3; ch. 76, p. 16a, l. 10; and vol. 5, ch. 81, p. 8b, l. 7.

93. This four-character expression occurs in *Yen-shih chia-hsün [chi-chieh]* (Family instructions for the Yen clan [with collected commentaries]), by Yen Chih-t'ui (531–91), ed. Wang Li-ch'i (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1980), *chüan* 5, ch. 16, p. 363, l. 9; a poem by Li Po (701–62), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 3, *chüan 177*, p. 1809, l. 14; *Lu-shan*

Yüan-kung hua, 1:180, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:368, l. 14; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:884, l. 2; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 2, *chüan* 23, p. 1087, ll. 21–22.

94. This four-character expression occurs in *Ta Mu-kan-lien ming-chien chiu-mu pien-wen* (Transformation text on Mahāmaudgalyāyana rescuing his mother from the underworld), dated 921, in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 2:744, l. 7.

95. This four-character expression occurs in *Yen-shih chia-hsün [chi-chieh], chüan* 5, ch. 16, p. 364, l. 3; *Ta Mu-kan-lien ming-chien chiu-mu pien-wen*, 2:744, l. 7; *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu, chia-chi, chüan 2*, p. 5b, l. 8; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1054, l. 20; *Huai-hsiang chi*, scene 30, p. 98, l. 3; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 46, p. 539, l. 11.

96. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Sou-shen chi* (In search of the supernatural), comp. Kou Tao-hsing (10th century), in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 2:884, l. 12; *Liu Chih-yüan chu-kung-tiao [chiao-chu]*, ch. 12, p. 146, l. 9; *Tung Chieh-yüan Hsi-hsiang chi, chüan* 8, p. 161, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1072, ll. 20–21; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:399, l. 17; and *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 1, scene 6, p. 21a, column 5.

97. These two lines occur verbatim, but in reverse order, in *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu, chia-chi, chüan* 1, p. 4b, l. 7; and *[Hsiao-shih] Chin-kang k'o-i [hui-yao chu-chieh], chüan 2*, p. 665, middle register, ll. 9 and 22. The stories behind these lines are elucidated in Chüeh-lien's (16th century) commentary on the latter source.

98. A variant of this sentence occurs in *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu, chia-chi, chüan* 1, p. 7b, ll. 7–8.

99. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:444, l. 17; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:918, l. 14; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 67, p. 768, l. 16; *Shih-hou chi*, scene 6, p. 15, l. 5; and *Hai-ling i-shih*, p. 60, l. 10.

100. The same sentiment is expressed in almost the same words in *Shen-i fu*, p. 52a, l. 6.

101. This idiomatic four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 63, p. 3a, l. 9.

102. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1072, l. 21; *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 14, l. 12; and *Shih-hou chi*, scene 27, p. 92, l. 7.

103. The Fourth Ch'an Patriarch is Tao-hsin (580–651). For a brief hagiographic account of this shadowy figure, see *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 1, pp. 50–51. For a critical assessment of the evolution of the legends surrounding the early patriarchs of Ch'an Buddhism, see Philip B. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 1–88.

104. This four-character expression occurs in a speech attributed to the Buddhist monk Ching-ts'en (d. 868), in *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 1, *chüan* 4, p. 208, l. 2; a commentary on the *Vajracchedikā prajñāpāramitā sutra* by the Buddhist monk Yüan-wu (1063–1135), as quoted in *Chin-kang ching chi-chu* (The *Vajracchedikā prajnāpāramitā sutra* with collected commentaries), comp. by the Yung-lo emperor of the Ming dynasty (r. 1402–24), preface dated 1424, fac. repr. of original edition (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi ch'u-pan she, 1984), p. 51a, col. 4; *Ts'ang-lang shih-hua [chiao-shih]* (Ts'ang-lang's remarks on poetry collated and annotated), by Yen Yü (13th century), ed. and annot. Kuo Shao-yü (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1962), p. 159, l. 11; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 20, l. 16.

105. There is surely an intended ironic contrast between the sordid career of Hsi-men Ch'ing, which is located in a place the name of which means Clear River, and the critical event leading to the saintly career of the Fifth Patriarch, which takes place on the bank of the Turbid River.

106. This four-character expression occurs in a poem by Chang Po-tuan (11th century), *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 10:6465, l. 3; the literary tale *Liao-yang hai-shen chuan* (The sea goddess of Liao-yang), by Ts'ai Yü (d. 1541), in *Ku-tai wen-yen tuan-p'ien hsiao-shuo hsüan-chu, erh-chi*, p. 386, l. 11; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 75, p. 857, l. 6.

107. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the *Fu-mu en chung ching chiang-ching wen* (Sutra lecture on the Sutra on the importance of parental kindness), dated 927, in *Tun-huang pien-wen chi*, 2:678, l. 5; *Tien-pao i-shih chu-kung-tiao*, p. 220, l. 3; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 2, ch. 78, p. 892, l. 9.

108. This four-character expression occurs in the course of a dialectical exchange with the Buddhist monk Pen-chi (840–901). See *Wu-teng hui-yüan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 13, p. 791, l. 15. It also occurs in *Ju-ju chü-shih yü-lu, chia-chi, chüan* 2, p. 3a, l. 13; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:1074, l. 3; *Hsiao-p'in chi*, p. 35, l. 4; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 8, p. 85, l. 4.

109. The question "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?" is a common koan, i.e., a paradoxical, or unanswerable, question or proposition, employed in Ch'an colloquies to stimulate sudden enlightenment. Bodhidharma (fl. 470–528) is the religious name of the semilegendary Indian monk who is honored as the First Patriarch of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism.

110. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *[Chi-p'ing-chiao-chu] Hsi-hsiang chi*, play no. 1, scene 3, p. 33, l. 2; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 1, p. 10, l. 6. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 81, p. 9b, l. 5.

111. The implication of this song is that the child in the Virgin's womb is an avatar of the Buddha Amitābha.

112. This four-character expression occurs in *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 12, p. 131, l. 5.

113. The sahā world is our present world of suffering where all are subject to transmigration.

114. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in a lyric attributed to Lü Tung-pin (9th century), *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 12, *chüan* 900, p. 10168, ll. 15–16; and *Hsi-yu chi*, vol. 1, ch. 15, p. 168, l. 15.

115. This four-character expression occurs in *Lu-shan Yüan-kung hua*, p. 179, ll. 1 and 5; *Kuan-shih-yin p'u-sa pen-hsing ching, chüan* 1, p. 6b, l. 10; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:516, ll. 8–9; *Yüeh-ming Ho-shang tu Liu Ts'ui*, p. 433, l. 16; and *Ch'üan-Han chih-chuan*, vol. 2, *chüan* 3, p. 38a, l. 10. It also recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 74, p. 16a, l. 4.

116. This four-character expression, describing one of the telltale signs that a person is destined for future greatness, occurs in *Liu Chih-yüan chu-kung-tiao [chiao-chu]*, p. 9, l. 9; *[Chiao-ting] Yüan-k'an tsa-chü san-shih chung*, p. 92, l. 6; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 2:583, l. 13; and *San-kuo chih t'ung-su yen-i*, vol. 1, *chüan* 9, p. 410, l. 23.

117. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Chang Po-tuan (11th century), *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 1:191, lower register, l. 3; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:798, l. 1; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:134, l. 7; *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 22, p. 57, l. 11; *P'o-yao chi, chüan* 1, scene 2, p. 4b, column 1; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 3, ch. 57, p. 963, l. 8; and *Hai-fu shan-t'ang tz'u-kao, chüan* 4, p. 187, l. 13.

118. It is a Chinese folk belief that if a person of exalted status humbles himself before a person of lower status the result can be fatal for the latter.

119. This line occurs in a poetic encomium on the Lotus *Sutra* by Emperor Jen-tsung (r. 1022–63) of the Sung dynasty, *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 7:4400, ll. 14–15. The emperor's poem, including this line, is also quoted with attribution in the early vernacular story *Hua-teng*

chiao Lien-nü ch'eng-Fo chi (The girl Lien-nü attains Buddhahood in her bridal palanquin), in *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen*, p. 193, l. 5; and without attribution in the ch'uan-ch'i drama *Nan-k'o meng chi* (The dream of the southern branch), by T'ang Hsien-tsu (1550–1616), completed in 1600, ed. and annot. Ch'ien Nan-yang (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan she, 1981), *chüan* 1, scene 8, p. 32, l. 14.

CHAPTER 40

1. A version of this poem, with some textual variants, is attributed to the Buddhist monk Tao-ch'ing (12th century) in *Ming-hsin pao-chien, chüan 2*, p. 8a, ll. 7–11.

2. A *jen-tzu* day would occur every sixty days in the sexagenary cycle. It is significant because this particular stem and branch combination puns with the expression *jen-tzu*, which means "to conceive a son."

3. This formulaic couplet occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 1:160, l. 5; 4:1681, l. 9; and *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 4, ch. 101, p. 1573, l. 5.

4. It was a folk belief that the afterbirth of a newborn baby should be carefully wrapped up and buried where it could come to no harm, lest the child should suffer adverse consequences. On the other hand, such afterbirths, especially those of firstborn male children, were in much demand because of the belief that they could be taken medicinally to increase potency and induce conception. As a result, midwives were said to do a brisk trade in purloined afterbirths. See *Pen-ts'ao kang-mu*, vol. 6, *chüan* 52, pp. 106–108; and *Wu tsa-tsu, chüan* 5, p. 134, ll. 10–14.

5. This formulaic couplet occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 3:992, l. 15; and 4:1587, l. 18.

6. This four-character expression occurs in the *Book of Rites*. See *Li-chi*, ch. 17, p. 73, l. 5; and Legge, *Li Chi*, 2:102, l. 20. It also occurs in *Chien-teng yü-hua, chüan* 3, p. 239, l. 14; and recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 64, p. 2b, l. 7; and vol. 5, ch. 82, p. 8a, l. 6.

7. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in *Yu-kuei chi*, scene 11, p. 33, l. 10.

8. This four-character expression occurs in *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 3:795, l. 6; and 3:796, l. 20.

9. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 75, p. 23b, l. 11; and p. 27a, ll. 8–9.

10. A very similar line recurs in ibid., vol. 3, ch. 50, p. lib, l. 7.

11. This line, with one insignificant variant, occurs in a poem attributed to a Buddhist monk named Chih-hui (14th century) in *Hsi-hu yu-lan chih-yü, chüan* 14, p. 283, l. 4.

12. Variants of this idiomatic expression recur in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 2, ch. 40, p. 8a, l. 4; vol. 4, ch. 67, p. 12b, l. 7; and ch. 75, p. 15b, l. 5.

13. This formulaic four-character expression occurs in the fifteenth-century prosimetric narrative *Jen-tsung jen-mu chuan* (The story of how Emperor Jen-tsung [r. 1022–63] reclaimed his mother), fac. repr. in *Ming Ch'eng-hua shuo-chang tz'u-hua ts'ung-k'an, ts'e* 4, p. 9b, l. 2.

14. This four-character expression recurs in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 4, ch. 73, p. 10b, l. 9.

15. This four-character expression occurs in an anecdote in *K'ai-yüan T'ien-pao i-shih*, in which Emperor Hsüan-tsung of the T'ang dynasty (r. 712–56) uses it to describe his favorite consort, Yang Kuei-fei (719–56). See ibid., *chüan 2*, p. 88, ll. 5–7.

16. These two lines recur together in the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 5, ch. 97, p. lib, ll. 4–5.

APPENDIX

1. See chap. 38, n. 37.
2. See chap. 38, n. 34.
3. P'an Yüeh (247–300) and Shen Yüeh (441–513), two of the most famous poets of the Six Dynasties period (222–589), are proverbially known for having bemoaned their premature grayness and emaciation.
4. This line is derived from the first couplet of a quatrain by the late T'ang poet Cheng Ku (cs 887). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 10, *chüan* 675, p. 7731, l. 10.
5. This line is from a poem by Su Shih (1037–1101). See chap. 21, n. 39.
6. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 1, n. 76.
7. Pa-ling was a place in the eastern suburbs of the T'ang capital Ch'ang-an, where it was customary to see off one's friends when they departed the metropolitan area and commemorate the occasion with farewell poems.
8. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 15, n. 8.
9. The last three lines of this song are derived from a poem about New Year's Eve by Tu Fu (712–70). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 224, p. 2399, l. 8.
10. This is the name of a famous melody that was often performed on the bugle at night in military posts, somewhat like taps in the U.S. army.
11. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 13, n. 16.
12. See ibid., chap. 3, n. 29.
13. See chap. 27, n. 37.
14. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 16, n. 15.
15. The last two lines are derived from a couplet attributed to Ou-yang Hsiu (1007–72). See *Ch'üan Sung shih*, 6:3812, l. 16.
16. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Chou Pang-yen (1056–1121). See *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:604, upper register, l. 16.
17. See Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase*, chap. 2, n. 15.
18. This proverbial expression, which means to retire from the fray while still at the top of one's form, is attributed to the Hemp-robed Master (10th century) in *Shao-shih wen-chien lu, chüan 7*, p. 70, ll. 11 and 13. On the Hemp-robed Master, see chap. 29, n. 21.
19. Legend has it that the octogenarian Chiang Tzu-ya (11th century B.C.) was fishing on the banks of P'an Stream when he was discovered by King Wen, the father of the founder of the Chou dynasty, who was so impressed by him that he immediately made him his chief advisor. See *Wu-wang fa Chou p'ing-hua*, pp. 55–63; and Liu Ts'un-yan, *Buddhist and Taoist Influences on Chinese Novels*, 1:63-64.
20. Legend has it that Po-i and Shu-ch'i, two noblemen who lived in the 11th century B.C., refused on principle to serve the newly founded Chou dynasty and retired to Shou-yang Mountain, where they subsisted by eating ferns until they died of starvation. See *Shih-chi*, vol. 7, *chüan* 61, p. 2123.
21. Ch'en T'uan (895–989) is said to have retired to Mount Hua in order to avoid serving the newly founded Sung dynasty. See chap. 29, n. 16.
22. This line probably refers to legends about Lü Tung-pin (9th century). See chap. 39, n. 48.

23. This line is ubiquitous in Chinese vernacular literature. See, e.g., *Wu-wang fa Chou p'ing-hua*, p. 19.1. 13; *Hsüan-ho i-shih*, p. 52, l. 7; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, 2:557, l. 19; *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien*, 1:116, l. 21; *P'i-p'a chi*, scene 3, p. 18, l. 9; *Sha-kou chi*, scene 19, p. 72, l. 2; *Ching-ch'ai chi*, scene 34, p. 103, ll. 6–7; *Ch'en Hsün-chien Mei-ling shih-ch'i chi*, p. 129, l. 9; *Yüeh-ming Ho-shang tu Liu Ts'ui*, p. 434, l. 3; *Shui-hu ch'üan-chuan*, vol. 1, ch. 2, p. 25, l. 13; and the *Chin P'ing Mei tz'u-hua*, vol. 3, ch. 48, p. 7b, ll. 4–5; and vol. 4, ch. 74, p. 9b, l. 3.

24. This line is derived from one in a poem by Tu Fu (712–70). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 4, *chüan* 225, p. 2410, l. 2.

25. This line is from a poem by Tu Mu (803–52). See *Ch'üan T'ang shih*, vol. 8, *chüan* 522, p. 5966, l. 4.

26. This four-character expression occurs in a lyric by Chou Tzu-chih (12th century). See *Ch'üan Sung tz'u*, 2:881, upper register, l. 16. It is based on a passage in *Chuang-tzu*. See Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, pp. 99–100.

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